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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. It's just after 3:30 p.m., and I see quorum.

This is meeting number 17 of the Standing Committee on National Defence. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on January 31, we are continuing our study of recruitment and retention.

As is the habit of this committee, we have outstanding witnesses, two of whom I understand are on, available and sound-checked, etc.

We have Grazia Scoppio, professor at RMC, and Lieutenant-General Christine Whitecross.

General Whitecross, it's nice to see you again. We're very pleased to welcome you to the committee.

I will ask for five-minute opening statements in the order in which you are listed on the order paper, starting with Ms. Scoppio.

Dr. Grazia Scoppio (Professor, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual): Good afternoon. It is my privilege to provide my perspective to inform the committee's study on recruitment and retention in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I am in Kingston, and I would like to briefly acknowledge that Kingston is located on traditional land of the Anishinabe, the Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat. I'm grateful to live and work on these lands.

I will speak on my own behalf, based on my research over the past 20-plus years, which has focused on diversity in the military in Canada and elsewhere.

The Canadian Armed Forces, or CAF, do not reflect Canada's rich cultural, ethnic, religious and gender diversity. Despite past and current efforts to meet their employment equity goals for representation rates of women, visible minorities and indigenous people, the CAF has failed to meet these goals and has consequently failed to achieve true diversity and inclusion across the organization. This in turn negatively affects operational effectiveness and the legitimacy of the armed forces in the eyes of Canadian society.

There are many reasons for these institutional failures, including the historical reactionary approach of the CAF towards social and cultural change due to its closed, traditional and patriarchal organizational culture; its apparent inability to learn lessons from past

mistakes; its hierarchical structures, embedded in the slow bureaucratic systems of the Department of National Defence; unclear accountability; systemic issues related to sexual assault and sexual misconduct; and discrimination towards members who are different from the majority of the CAF membership, who are mainly white, male, heterosexual and Christian.

Specifically in regard to CAF recruiting and retention, over the past 20-plus years several studies and reports by external authorities, the Auditor General of Canada, researchers within the Department of National Defence—such as me—and others outside of DND have collectively identified many problems in these areas. Among the issues I have observed and reported on, the following stand out in the areas of recruiting and retention, listed in no particular order.

Number one, the CAF recruiting system has been inefficient and slow. Number two, there has been inadequate and not timely follow-up with candidates who have applied and not yet received an offer and to provide feedback and timings on each step to the candidates. Number three is a lack of follow-up with those who have rejected offers of employment by the CAF to gain an understanding of the reasons for the rejection. Number four is inadequate or missing data on CAF applicants disaggregated by gender and other intersecting identities, as well as by foreign-born status. Number five, CAF recruiters have not sufficiently reflected the cultural, ethnic and gender diversity of the Canadian population. Number six, CAF recruiting postings have not been seen as key career posts towards promotion.

Number seven, training for CAF recruiters has been insufficient on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, unconscious bias and related topics. Number eight, not enough information is provided to prospective applicants on the wide spectrum of CAF occupations, as well as on realistic job previews, including family supports. Number nine is that there are insufficient marketing and outreach activities specifically tailored to women, visible minorities, indigenous peoples and other minority groups. Number 10 is insufficient recruiting programs aimed at attracting diverse applicants, aside from the valuable CAF recruiting programs for indigenous people and the 2017 pilot of the women in force program, which, to my knowledge, has never been run again.

Number 11 is scarce or lacking exit interviews with members who are releasing from the CAF. Number 12 is that CAF training and educational activities related to diversity, equity and inclusion have been inadequate, incoherent and uncoordinated. Number 13, the security clearance system has been extremely slow. Last but certainly not least is the requirement of being a Canadian citizen to join the CAF.

Many recommendations have been made to address the issues mentioned, and several more. However, often recommendations have been ignored, they have been acknowledged but not properly implemented, or the implementation has not been tracked and results have not been accounted for. As such, the problems have become endemic.

Ultimately, if social and cultural change is to occur across the CAF, and to restore Canada's respect and trust in its military, swift actions need to be taken, from recruiting to attraction and retention. These actions need to be tracked, results must be measured, and the leadership must be held accountable.

● (1535)

At the same time, appropriate financial resources and personnel need to be allocated to implement any new activities, programs and processes. As they say, a vision without resources is a hallucination.

This concludes my opening statement. Thank you. *Meegwetch.*

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Scoppio.

Go ahead, Lieutenant-General Whitecross.

Lieutenant-General (Retired) Christine Whitecross (As an Individual): Good afternoon, everyone and Mr. Chair.

I actually don't have any opening comments except to say that I retired from the Canadian Armed Forces in December 2020 and haven't necessarily been involved in the substantive recruiting and retention issues since then, but I can certainly offer up my suggestions and my comments on the questions.

I would just add that any comments I make are not necessarily anything to do with recommendations towards the Canadian Armed Forces or anything. Certainly, as a retired member, these are my thoughts and my concerns only.

The Chair: Making them infinitely more valuable because they are your thoughts....

With that, we'll start our six-minute round.

Ms. Findlay, go ahead please.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

Lieutenant-General Whitecross, I want to thank you for your service to Canada, first of all. You started your career as an RMC cadet. Is that correct?

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: No, regrettably—well, not regrettably, actually—I'm quite proud to say that I went to Queen's.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Wonderful. What made you want to join the Canadian Forces as a young woman at that time?

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: That's an excellent question. Thanks very much.

I would offer that I joined in 1982, 40 years ago. At that time I had been air cadet and an army cadet. My father was in the military, as was my uncle, and my brothers were all in the reserves. I liked the lifestyle. I thought that I would give it a chance, and I joined while I was at Queen's University, thinking that I would give it a couple of years and see how it went.

Of course, that almost extended to 39 years. Really, it was an interest in the military system. I would just add that I knew about the military because it was in my family. I think one of the biggest issues that we need to come to grips with in terms of the recruiting for potential Canadian Armed Forces members is the awareness by Canadians of the Canadian military, what it does, what it is structured to do and the tremendous opportunities that it has. I had that from family.

● (1540)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: One of the things we've heard in testimony is that we need more visibility of the armed forces, more stationing nearer to urban centres and things like that, where people can become more familiar with the life within the CAF and what service within it means.

What would you say, overall, was your motivation to stay for a career in the Canadian Armed Forces? As you pointed out, it became your lifelong career.

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: I enjoyed the Canadian Armed Forces. In fact, I'm still very passionate about what the Canadian Armed Forces has done, not just domestically but internationally. I had tremendous opportunities to live in many of the provinces in Canada, including our Canadian Arctic, and to do things that many of my colleagues at the university would never have been able to do. That includes leading men and women in both domestic and international tasks that are important to the Government of Canada's priorities.

I enjoyed it. I enjoyed what it gave me, and I enjoyed the opportunities that it showed me. I enjoyed service to Canada. I know that may sound trite to many, but it meant a tremendous amount to me.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: How seriously do you think the senior military and political leadership took reform and sexual misconduct at DND when you were chief of military personnel and afterwards?

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: I'll answer that in two parts. First, I'd like to answer, on my own reflection, after having served for so many years and after retiring from the Canadian military, that I wish I had done more. I wish I had been more vocal in many ways on the things that needed to be done, because in answer to the second question, there was, at the time, certainly in 2015 when I took over as the commander of the sexual misconduct response team, a percentage—I wouldn't say necessarily small but a percentage—of Canadian Armed Forces personnel and perhaps defence personnel who didn't think the issue was as significant or as serious as Madame Deschamps had said. I wish, upon reflection, that I could have been far more aggressive in how I was characterizing it and how it was actually affecting men and women in uniform.

Having said that, I think there's a big difference between 2015 and certainly when I retired in 2020, and even today. The fact that these scenarios that have happened or the personnel who have departed in the last number of months.... I think much of that has to do with the fact that people feel okay about reporting. I take some comfort in that.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Did you witness discrimination against LGBTQ+ members of the Canadian Forces during your time?

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: That's a great question.

Certainly I grew up in the eighties and nineties, having joined in 1982, and I was certainly cognizant of the times when LGBTQ members were sought after and made to release from the Canadian military back in the nineties. I certainly was aware of it. I was fairly young at the time and didn't know what to make of it, to be completely honest.

As I got further and further along in my military career, I like to think that my own tolerance and patience level was fairly good, in that the interactions I had were hopefully positive.

But I have to be honest. I was not aware of many specific incidents that I had actually seen. I had members come to see me, even as late as 2016 or 2017, about the ways that they were treated, in the hopes that I would be able to help them, and I hope that I was actually able to help them. In some cases, I'm still in conversations with them.

I think the system or the organization or the institution is better suited to deal with these sorts of complaints. However, today the report came out and the minister was very clear, and so were the working group members, that the recommendations that have been made for years and years just haven't been applied. I would say that's probably correct.

• (1545)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. May, you have six minutes.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses for being here today.

My first question is going to go to Dr. Scoppio.

The armed forces have specific recruitment targets for under-represented groups, but have faced, obviously as you mentioned in your opening statement, persistent challenges in meeting those targets. In your opinion, what factors are driving these challenges?

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: As I mentioned, there are different pieces to this problem, one being that the face of the recruiters is not necessarily the face of all Canadians, so there's not enough diversity within the recruiters as a group. Their training is insufficient in terms of such things as diversity inclusion, unconscious bias and so on and so forth. The programming is not tailored enough for specific groups.

I gave the example of the aboriginal leadership opportunity year or the aboriginal entry program. Those are excellent programs to attract indigenous people. They have done no such programs for visible minorities, and they did once—one year—a pilot program to attract more women.

I don't see how the CAF is going to get to 25.1% in 2027, unless my math is wrong.

Mr. Bryan May: Dr. Scoppio, have any Canadian allies, any countries around the world, been more successful in recruiting from diverse groups? If so, what are they doing differently?

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: One of the things, for example in the States, is that being in a recruiting unit is not somebody's career death sentence. Being in a recruiting unit is not seen the same way, so that can be something that we can learn from. It does not follow that the U.S. military, being the largest in the world, is not having recruiting challenges, so that's not the issue. The other thing is that they're much more aggressive in tailoring their recruiting, in particular towards certain groups. We're just not doing enough in that regard.

Again, I want to also underline that if we deplete the recruiting group of their resources, but then we expect them to do more with less, we are contradicting ourselves. If we want them to do more, there are different pieces of this pie that we need to look at, but appropriate resources are key for success here.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you.

Lieutenant-General Whitecross, first of all, thank you for your service and for appearing here today.

We're seeing a significant shift driven a lot by technology change in the security and defence field towards a greater emphasis on cyber, on remotely piloted weapons systems, on electronic warfare and fast-paced information and intelligence-based operations. In that context, how is the function and role of modern armed forces changing in your view?

• (1550)

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: That's a great question. The battles of today are not the battles of 30 years ago. I would venture to say, or I would submit, that if the battles are different, then the people you require in order to meet that battle landscape have to be different as well.

You alluded to it yourself. They need to be technically proficient. Look at main battle tanks and some of our armoured vehicles. A lot of the young men and women who drive them are able to do that so proficiently because they have that great hand-eye coordination they're getting from gaming and other things. There are certain aspects we need of the recruits today that we didn't probably need many years ago.

I would just link that to something else, which is that the war fighter of today is obviously different from in the past, but the requirement for a war fighter has always been that it's someone who's respected and someone for whom there's no incongruity, in my humble opinion, between being a war fighter and being a respectful human being and treating everyone with respect and dignity. I think in today's climate, today's conflict climate, that's even more important because you lose information and data space when you lack trust, whether it's military or public servants, or it doesn't matter, because they feel more compelled to be able to share information and it's so much easier to share information today. It really behooves us in many ways to make sure that the people we do attract and we do retain have that sort of fundamental competency or characteristic about themselves as well.

Mr. Bryan May: I have a few more seconds left here, so I will just simply say thank you to both of you for helping us with this study today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. May.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank both witnesses.

My questions are directed more to Dr. Scoppio, but I urge Lieutenant General Whitecross to speak if she would like to respond.

My first question relates to the report released today. In the past, we've seen a lot of evidence that minorities, women and LGBTQ+ diversity individuals have faced challenges.

The report says that recommendations made over the past 20 years have still not been acted upon or have been outright ignored. What message does this send?

Should we be concerned that the same thing will keep happening in the future? It could discourage an individual who wants to make the jump and join the forces.

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: That's a good question.

I'm hopeful the new minister, Ms. Anand, will follow up and hold people accountable. I also believe she's going to make sure this time around that action is taken and we have tools to measure progress.

I found it refreshing when the department admitted publicly that almost nothing had been done despite the fact that, for over 20 years, a lot of research and many reports had been pointing out all the existing issues, including discrimination. We promised to

right these wrongs and make up for the lack of action, and also ensure that measures would be taken to address these systemic issues.

So I feel the new minister is truly showing leadership and I really trust her. I wasn't surprised by what the committee said, because I just told you the same thing myself. I've briefed generals who thanked me, then did nothing. Still, it's reassuring to know that I'm not the only one who did research and was ignored.

Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much for your response.

I am going to ask you a question that's kind of in the same vein. We know that research has been done on minorities, on the status of women and on LGBTQ+ diversity. However, we parliamentarians hear quite regularly about another topic, but we never or almost never see a report about it, and that's the status of Francophones.

Can you tell me if any studies have been done on a form of discrimination against Francophones in the forces?

• (1555)

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: I can't name any specific reports with authors and dates. I've heard stories that show that French is not really the second official language in the forces. French is sometimes used when people say "bonjour" at the beginning of a public speech or "merci" at the end. That doesn't constitute bilingual communication by the leaders.

I imagine that Francophones within the forces feel they are in a minority and are not really part of a bilingual organization. In short, I will have to do some research to locate some studies.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Your response speaks volumes. No real research has been done on this issue. I would like to ask another question, which you may be able to answer. If you don't have an answer, that in itself will be an answer.

Are Francophones harder to recruit and retain than Anglophones? For example, do we know if it's more difficult to recruit and retain Francophones, who do make up a significant portion of the population?

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: I don't think so, since the current recruitment system is bilingual. Everything is bilingual, including the forms and the staff at recruitment centres. If someone asks to be served in either official language, they will be. In terms of recruitment, I believe it's pretty much the same thing. It's more once you're in the organization that the default language is always English.

I'm reassured by the fact that the Royal Military College Saint-Jean is now a university. I can tell you without fear of contradiction that at the Royal Military College here in Kingston, we had individuals who were not too happy. I, for one, was very pleased that the Royal Military College Saint-Jean became a university again offering programs completely in French. I think we can be proud of that.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you to both the witnesses.

I often find myself building on what Madame Normandin asks. In terms of that report we heard from today, there are 258 outstanding recommendations that have come forward out of so many reports after so many years.

This is for both witnesses. I very much appreciate the perspective of both witnesses but, Professor Scoppio, I'm a little bit concerned. I'm wondering if you can comment. The minister and this government have been faced with repeated reports from the status of women committee, from the Auditor General and from Deschamps, and there hasn't been movement. Now there have been conversations about waiting for the other report from Justice Arbour. In terms of where we stand now and continuing to wait, especially for women who are potentially facing that toxic culture of masculinity and sexual assault and so on, what would you have to say about that?

Maybe a bit differently—because I like to squeeze a couple of questions in but sometimes my time is limited—General Whitecross, you left the armed forces but you talked about not having done as much as you had wanted to. In a previous testimony with status of women, you spoke about following up on momentum. Could you address that in terms of another report that we've seen and what we need to do immediately instead of waiting for Arbour?

• (1600)

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: I'll let General Whitecross answer first.

The Chair: That's fine. Do you want to answer?

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: Sure.

Thanks, Professor.

I have said publicly that I wish I had done more, and, as I mentioned just a couple of minutes ago, I wish I had been a lot more aggressive in my characterization of the issue and of the problems. I'm only one person, but honestly, because of the position I was in, I submit that I probably could have done a lot more.

I did manage to hear some of the reports from the minister that came out today, but there were some problems with the video. I also am heartened by this minister and what she's been able to accomplish already insofar as not only is she accepting change and accepting that much of the responsibility lies with her, the deputy minister and the CDS, but also she is personally engaged and personally motivated to see change. I find a lot of strength in that, so I'm going to take that away.

In the military we say, "Hope is never a course of action", but I think in this particular case, hope is a course of action, because I do see and I hear that people are anticipating a difference in the monitoring and in the fact that people will be held to account. That makes me feel good, because it's certainly something, as the professor expressed just a moment ago, that hadn't been done. There were all of these recommendations in the report that was submitted today that had not been tackled and had not been addressed. To be completely honest, it just absolutely breaks my heart to think that we have let people down, and I say "we" because I was a senior member of the Canadian Armed Forces for a very long time.

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: Just to follow up on what the general said, I am also feeling positive about the new minister. Her action on the interim report from Madam Arbour was swift. She did not hesitate. I've heard—and again this is anecdotal—that unfortunately in some of the cases of investigations that had already started and that had been passed on to civilian police that some civilian police forces said they didn't have the resources. If you were handing over to the civilian police all of these cases that were already started by the MPs, would you not want to talk to them first to just say, "Are we on the same page? Do we have the resources?" There has been swift action, and that's awesome, but did they necessarily have conversations with their civilian police partners? I'm not sure.

The other thing I want to say is about the speed with which this report by Madam Arbour is coming out. It's not out yet. I would like to see it come out, and then I would really like to say we've done enough research that we can implement a number of actions with appropriate resources, with an implementation plan and with accountability by the people who are going to be charged with each of these recommendations.

The Chair: Madam Gallant, you have five minutes, please.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for Lieutenant-General Whitecross.

First of all, what is the main choke point for people who sign up versus those who follow through until being posted to a unit?

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: Is that "choke point" as in between being a civilian and being a fully trained military member? Is that what you meant?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: They want to become a member of the military, but something along the way happens or doesn't happen and they never make it to the point where they're posted to a unit.

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: I can't speak to what's happening right now because I'm retired, obviously, but I understand that there are choke points, as you described them.

There was literally a stopgap during COVID, for all very good reasons. Then, with some of the measures that had to be put in place because of COVID, when we did start bringing people back into the recruitment centres, that created extra time and space.

There is the portal, if I can call it that, between being signed in at the recruiting centre where you swear allegiance, to going through basic training and then going through your TQ3 or your officer training. Some of that may take a very long period of time, because there isn't the mass of people who are going through that training at that time. It almost has to be a critical path method and all of that. I understand that the Canadian Armed Forces is trying to put more structure in that so there's less waiting between the courses' availability, so that people come in just in time to do the basic training and then they can go off to their trades qualifications training or their officer qualification training and the like.

I mean, there needs to be a lot of work put into that. You can imagine the number of schools across the Canadian Armed Forces. There were 105 occupations—I suspect there are still 105—and each one of those requires certain competencies in terms of technical and professional skill sets. In order to be a fully qualified member of the Canadian Armed Forces, you need to go through certain steps, and sometimes those steps just aren't aligned. I understand that they're trying to address that.

I hope that answers your question.

• (1605)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is there something wrong with soldiers having a warrior mindset on the job?

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: I've said publicly that there's nothing wrong with being a warrior. A warrior mindset is not incongruent with being somebody who is respectful, works in a very dignified way and treats people properly. They are congruent. You can't have one without the other.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: From the outset, women have said that the sexual assault investigations must be separate from the chain of command.

How do we make that severance? They were asking for that long before the Deschamps report, yet it never seems to happen.

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: I can only tell you what I know from when I was serving, and that is that the SMRC, which is outside of the military chain of command, offers.... Again, you need to speak with Dr. Preston.

I understand that they're increasing the scope, availability and resources of the SMRC for the Canadian Armed Forces, which I think is absolutely tremendous and certainly one of the things we hoped for back when we started these discussions. This is available.

There are other ways. Now that the civilian police are dealing with the investigations, people can go directly to the civilian police. There are other options available that were perhaps not available many years ago.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Were you aware of how women and men who reported assaults were effectively drummed out of the military—and to a certain extent, it is still happening—for reporting sexual assaults?

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: To be honest, no. I was not aware of any case where somebody was kicked out because they put in a sexual assault claim. I am aware, anecdotally for the most part, of people who were treated poorly. That's not just anecdotally. People I know were treated poorly during the investigation phase. Some of them chose to retire because they didn't want to maintain ties to an institution that didn't treat them well, so would it surprise me...?

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Gallant.

We have Mr. Fisher for five minutes, please.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to our witnesses.

General Whitecross, thank you very much for your service—what a long and storied career. It's nice to see you again here on this committee.

Madam Gallant talked a bit about the recruitment process. She called it a “choke point”. I was going to call it a “bottleneck”. You touched on it, and thank you for that.

Think about our allies. Can you provide any information on who's doing really well with those parts of the process that are slowing people down and that might make them take a different career path because the process is too long?

• (1610)

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: Honestly, I don't know which allies or colleague nations are doing well in recruiting. It's not because I don't think there are any. It's just that, honestly, I don't know.

To get prepared for this, I did speak to the general officer who is in charge of recruiting right now. I know that she's very much seized with trying to modernize the recruiting system and do a whole bunch of other things, and I would really encourage you to speak to her when you have the opportunity.

In terms of recruiting, I come from a family of military, so I understood the military and I knew what the military was when I was going into it. I think awareness for the Canadian population has to really increase if we want to increase the number of recruiting successes across the nation in terms of meeting a whole bunch of other targets and a bunch of other things.

I would offer that, and I would submit that, you around the table have something to do with that by working with the people in your ridings—many of you have recruiting centres—to get the information out. There are 105 occupations. When people talk about the military, they think infanteer, pilot or whatever. They don't realize that there are so many other opportunities there. We really need to get the message out so that more people will apply.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much.

Dr. Scoppio, you didn't get a chance to weigh in on this particular topic. In your opening remarks, you said that the recruiting system is “inefficient and slow” and you said that there is “insufficient marketing”.

Could you chime in a bit on that question from that member and from me on the bottlenecks in the recruiting process, on who else as an ally might be doing a good job and on who we could look to for marketing ideas?

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: Thank you for your question.

Based on the research we did on the ROTP, the regular officer training plan, and in looking at it through a GBA+ lens, we did surveys with officer cadets in the military college, officer cadets who were doing their degree through military universities as well as applicants for the ROTP. This is no longer anecdotal information. I can tell you for a fact that the system is too slow. Some of our respondents said their files were lost. They were lost, and if you worked in the private sector and you lost files, I would submit to you that your career in that private sector would not last very long.

In terms of marketing, as I mentioned to you before, I think the U.S. does a good job. They're much more aggressive with their marketing. I know that you didn't ask me this, but I've been working on one particular project and looking at immigrant participation in 12 different countries. I can tell you that Canada is at the more restrictive end of the spectrum, because, at least officially, we do not recruit non-citizens, so right away we are restricting our pool of possible applicants.

These are some of the things that to me are key. If the process is too slow, we're going to lose applicants. We're definitely going to lose applicants if we lose their files. The security system is like watching paint dry, and as a minimum we need to open up to permanent residents of Canada. That's as a minimum.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I didn't want to cut you off with your last three questions, but I just did.

Madame Normandin is next for two and a half minutes.

Go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to continue with the same line of questioning as Mr. Fisher. It has to do with your opening remarks, Dr. Scoppio, more specifically with processing times for hiring documents.

The report released today talks about members of the military who have become extremists. I understand that a security process must be followed when recruiting individuals into the forces. However, could the selection process be shortened, while maintaining the criteria to ensure that quality individuals are recruited? Can the process be shortened without taking away what is necessary?

• (1615)

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: That's a good question, Ms. Normandin. The simple answer is yes. I'll give you an example I myself experienced. This is not hearsay.

Early in my career with the organization, I worked at the Canadian Defence Academy. I was chosen to be one of the civilians who would represent Canada at the NATO Defense College in Rome.

Imagine that, because I had lived in Italy—Italy is a NATO member country, ma'am—in the previous decade, the clearance process took one year. In the meantime, someone else took the position for which I was selected to represent Canada at the college.

The army colonel to whom I reported at the time later became a general and retired. He had told me that it was not possible. I swore to him that it was and that I had to give up the position.

These things aren't just made up and it's not anecdotal: Research has proven that the timelines are too long, we're losing applicants, and the process needs to be shortened while making sure we meet the security criteria.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Mathyssen, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Professor, you were speaking about a lot of the support programs and so on, and how they're insufficient in terms of the armed forces. Certainly, from a lot of witnesses in this current study, we've heard about housing and the difficulties with moving and not being able to afford housing anymore. I think all Canadians are dealing with that, but there's certainly a very unique issue with the armed forces. Some of the witnesses have said that there should be a reinstatement of the post living differential.

For both witnesses, could you comment with a yes or no on whether you think that's a good idea?

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: I'm going to leave this question for the general. She's probably much better versed on this topic.

The Chair: Excuse me, Professor Scoppio, but we just suddenly switched from English to French. Can we just go back at it again? The translators are going to do it.

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: The question was in English, so I answered it in English.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: The French translation came through on the English channel. That's the issue.

The Chair: Would you like to ask your question again?

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Yes. Ultimately it was just that witnesses had mentioned the necessity of reinstating the post living differential, and I want to hear opinions on that from both.

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: I'm sure it would be helpful, but in terms of the specifics, I think General Whitecross would probably be best placed to answer this specific question.

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: I would offer that PLD is actually quite a topic—it certainly was when I was still serving—and it has to do with the disparities in the costs of living among different parts of the country. Some have far better access to housing, as you can imagine, than others do. In certain areas, specifically those areas that are hard to reach—Cold Lake comes to mind—housing is very expensive, so this post living differential is supposed to help create equality among armed forces members across the country.

The issue, in my humble opinion, is that there is just not enough PLD to go around to sufficiently address all of the people in the Canadian Armed Forces who live in areas in which the housing market is so expensive. I don't think it is sufficient.

The Chair: Thank you, MP Mathysen.

I'm not quite sure whether we're losing General Whitecross. No, she seems to be back.

Mr. Motz, you are next, for five minutes, please.

• (1620)

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

My questions are going to be directed to General Whitecross.

Thank you again for your service to our country—it's greatly appreciated—and for your career, which is exemplary, to say the least.

Being retired now, you can speak in hypotheticals, because you don't necessarily represent the Canadian Armed Forces anymore.

We are anywhere between 7,500 and 10,000 personnel short, depending on who you read and who you talk to. It could be a recruiting problem, a retention problem or both. You are now in charge of...whether it be the Canadian Armed Forces or recruiting and retention. What would you do if you had that role to fix both the recruiting side and the retention side?

You have the full four minutes and 12 seconds left to respond.

LGen (Ret'd) Christine Whitecross: Thank you very much.

If I were in charge of the world, which thankfully I am not, there are certain parts of recruiting—and again, this is Chris Whitecross speaking—that I think can be contracted out. We can get somebody else to do it far more efficiently in terms of the process, that big.... Somebody was talking about the process being so slow and people dropping files or whatever. That's certainly one of the aspects.

The issue of the number in the Canadian Armed Forces is a recruitment plus a retention issue. You can't have one without the other. Generally we would recruit between 5,000 to 6,000 people a year, but if 10,000 people are leaving, you're going to be null and void in terms of your numbers going forward.

There is work happening, which I'm really pleased to say started back in 2015 and 2016, to really look at the career of a military person and to speed up going from reserves back to regular force, and to give them a little more autonomy in terms of where they live—so that's extending the posting cycles and all that kind of stuff. I think those are really important things that need to be looked at.

I would say that a modernization of the Canadian Forces recruiting system that supports all of the recruiting has to happen as well. You need to have the right people at the recruiting centres. I agree. You need to have recruiting centres that are reflective of Canadian society—people who want to be there—that are fully manned and provide the wherewithal to help people make the right decisions when it comes to what occupation they want to pick.

I would also say, if I were queen of the world, that it would be great if there was more effort put into connecting with Canadians, to let Canadians know what the Canadian Armed Forces is, who they are, what they do and the tremendous good they do. I know there has been some negative media—I get it—and some of the things I've read in the last decade have hurt me to the core of my being.

I also maintain that, at the core, the institution is made up of good people, and they're doing some tremendously important and very significant work, not just here in Canada but around the world. Regrettably, very few people know that. I think it's really important that we connect better with Canadians and that they have a better characterization of what their military does, because their military is there for them and we need them. To embrace them and show them that, when they see an ad for the Canadian Armed Forces, they should see themselves in that and see that this is a possibility for them.

If you could manage to do all of that, you might be able to increase the numbers.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Motz.

I think we have a very capable candidate for queen of the world right now.

For the final five minutes, we have Ms. Lambropoulos.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses.

For my questions, I'm going to continue from where a couple of my colleagues left off.

Ms. Scoppio, you mentioned in your response to my colleague Mr. May that the U.S. is doing a much better job at recruiting a more diverse population of candidates and that Canada doesn't necessarily put as many resources as we should or that we don't necessarily have the resources currently to put in that place.

Can you give any specific examples of what they do in order to attract that more diverse population that we're looking to attract as well? Can you give us anything specific that we would eventually be able to recommend?

• (1625)

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: I can, one hundred per cent. We actually wrote a policy brief on this. It was part of this project that looked at immigrants in 12 countries. In some countries like the U.S.—and the U.S. is an example of the more open end of the spectrum—citizenship is not a requirement to join. In addition, joining often provides an expedited path to citizenship.

In my opinion, our labour force in Canada depends on immigrants. Not all of those immigrants are already going to have acquired citizenship. In particular on arrival, some people are going to be looking at different jobs and they will find out that they are not welcome in our forces until they have acquired citizenship, which can take up to five years or longer, so we have lost a very huge pool of possible candidates.

Where are these immigrants coming from? The majority of immigrants to Canada now come from Asia and Africa, so by definition these are visible minorities by and large. Not only are we missing out on potential recruits but these potential recruits are men and women from different visible minority communities.

If I were the queen—nobody appointed me the queen, but if I appointed myself the queen—that would be the number one thing I would do. I would change that requirement. It is entrenched in law, so the Canadian Armed Forces cannot change that on their own.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

Another reason there is an issue with retention and recruitment, as you mentioned in your remarks, has to do with family and the effects that it has on family. I believe you mentioned that as well.

What can the armed forces offer families in order to make the effects of someone's husband or wife being in the forces less impactful and make it easier for them to live a family life as well?

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: My point was specifically about how in the recruiting centres it's very important that the recruiters highlight those aspects, because there are a lot of supports for families through the forces. These sorts of benefits and these supports are not always highlighted appropriately—again, this is from our research—when a recruiter is speaking to an applicant or a potential applicant.

What you are asking about specifically is a military couple. Did I understand that, or is it just about postings in different parts of Canada?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: It's about the effects that a posting has on the family.

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: That, I can tell you, is getting worse with this housing market being completely out of reach for most Canadians. The fact that somebody owns a house gives them reassurance that they are okay at least, but if somebody owns a house, say, in Gagetown—and I don't mean that in any way, shape or form as a bad example—and then they're posted to the Toronto area, the difference is going to be huge.

This whole issue of the housing market is going to compound the already difficult task of moving a family across the country.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

Could you just comment on why you believe exit interviews would benefit this process as well?

Dr. Grazia Scoppio: Absolutely, I'd be happy to enlighten you. When we were doing research on the ROTP, which was requested by RMC, we asked to have access to the exit interviews of cadets who were releasing. We did not want to have names. We clearly asked for the data to be sanitized. We just wanted to get an understanding. That access was denied.

There are some organizations that don't gather exit interviews within the forces. Some do, but then they don't really do anything with them. Then, when somebody wants to do something about them, wants to have a look at them and wants to analyze them as a researcher—we were a team and I wasn't by myself—and that access is denied, to me, that's a red flag. I'm sorry. That's a huge red flag. What is it that you don't want me to see?

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Lambropoulos. That brings to an end our first hour.

As in previous sessions, the witnesses have been uniformly excellent and we really appreciate the contributions you have made. Unlike previous witnesses, however, both of you reversed the Canadian decline for the monarchy, I think, so I'm expecting that candidates for queen will be forthcoming.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Again, thank you.

We'll suspend for a few minutes while we re-empanel.

Thanks again. As I said, General Whitecross, it's a delight to see you again.

We're suspended.

• (1630)

(Pause)

• (1630)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

This is the start of the second hour in our recruitment and retention study. We have two witnesses with us. Youri Cormier is from the Conference of Defence Associations, and Dr. John Cowan is principal emeritus at RMC.

In no particular order, I'm going to ask for Mr. Cormier's opening five-minute statement and then go to Dr. Cowan's five-minute statement. We'll go to questions after that.

Mr. Cormier, you have five minutes.

• (1635)

Dr. Youri Cormier (Executive Director, Conference of Defence Associations): Thank you so much.

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for the invitation. It's good to see many of you again.

I am Dr. Youri Cormier. I'm an adjunct professor at the Royal Military College of Canada. I also serve as the executive director of the Conference of Defence Associations. We're a national non-profit, non-partisan organization composed of 40 member associations that represent over 400,000 active and retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I want to start by encouraging the Government of Canada to be very ambitious in the modifications it wants to bring to the Canadian Armed Forces. The military should embody what Canada can be rather than merely being a reflection of what Canada is. The higher its aspirations and purpose, the more likely you are to attract the best and the brightest recruits.

If Parliament wants a strong CAF, elaborating a clear, bold and updated foreign policy would be a great start, followed by a defence policy that is resourced and given the means to carry out this vision. Successful missions and nobility of purpose are what make service attractive, and if you have neither of these, you're Vladimir Putin, with mercenaries and conscripts deserting you on all sides.

[Translation]

We find comfort in making comparisons.

[English]

That's the big picture. Now I'm going to transition to some more nitty-gritty remarks. It's a bit of a grocery list, so please bear with me as I go through it.

On the subject of culture, we need to answer these questions: What is or what should be the archetypal soldier? Do we really need universality of service? Is a single approach to basic training what we want, or should we develop a greater diversity of entry points to the military and also a greater diversity of what the concept of a soldier should be?

Bullying and misconduct in the armed forces takes root in such a narrow definition of the archetypal soldier. It creates false notions regarding natural endowments and fitness to serve. What starts off as teasing on how one compares to this archetype ends up with escalating increments of dehumanization. Creating more entry streams into the military would focus training on people's strengths rather than exposing their weaknesses to their peers.

Based on my own personal experience teaching at CMR and RMC, I'd say these are places that need a total rethink in order to become the source of the culture we want in the forces, instead of the continuation of one that we don't want.

With regard to recruitment, we know there are enough people knocking at the door. The real issue is getting the right diversity and the right skill set amongst them. Now a quick fix—and this has been alluded to by witnesses prior to me—would be for the CAF to open recruitment to landed immigrants as a fast track to obtaining Canadian citizenship, insofar as appropriate background checks and security assessments are done. This would mean modifying the National Defence Act, as well as the immigration act.

On the subject of advertising, one challenge to this is the political control of the recruitment message. Privy Council oversight can limit the ability of the CAF to create targeted, timely and effective

advertising. Are we targeting the right people and the right age group with the right message? Are we using the most up-to-date online methodologies to push out ads towards geographic and demographic targets?

The next set of points I want to bring up are with regard to career flexibility and work-family balance—the new normal, if you will. I think the CAF has had a really hard time adapting to this new normal. Dual-income families are the norm today, and the military can no longer have a staffing model that works best if you have a stay-at-home mom or dad in the equation.

Transitioning in and out of the CAF between reserve forces and regular forces needs to be made easy. A centralized HR database and payroll system would be a great start. Members of the CAF should be kept in this database even if they leave the forces in their early or mid-career on the off chance that they return, unless they specifically ask to be removed. This would minimize the bureaucracy of re-entry.

In fact, we should be encouraging CAF members to gain experience in the private sector. They'll develop the greater originality of thinking and knowledge of state-of-the-art technologies that result from having a very fluid career path, which is the kind of career path that young people today are looking for. It's a tight labour market out there, a race for talent. If you want to be competitive, the CAF needs to be chasing mid- to late-career professionals and commissioning them directly at the rank of major or colonel.

Finally, interprovincial labour mobility barriers limit the willingness of families to move and, by extension, stay in the forces. Through the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, it would be really useful to facilitate professional recognition and exemptions among professional orders for members of the CAF and their families. For nurses, plumbers, you name it, with over 300 professional orders and organizations across the country, there are huge hurdles to interprovincial mobility for the military.

The final point I want to bring is that the recent budget made major announcements regarding the need for more affordable housing in Canada. Military spending can be leveraged to achieve part of this objective, while also potentially helping us upward on the NATO spending target of 2% of GDP. Places like Wainwright and Cold Lake need more homes, but they're not the only ones. The military has land all across the country on which to build homes. In this sense, we can hit two birds with one stone. Access to home ownership would definitely attract young Canadians into service.

• (1640)

I'd like to thank you for your time at this point, and I'll gladly take your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Cormier.

Dr. Cowan, you have five minutes, please.

Dr. John Cowan (Principal Emeritus, Royal Military College of Canada, As an Individual): Good afternoon.

As noted in my brief and its appendix, which have been circulated, my various exposures to recruiting and retention issues stem from my time as principal, RMC, and from my time as a member and chair of the defence science advisory board of Canada, which is now called the “defence advisory board”, as well as my four years as president of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute and some involvement with the reserve army as well.

My brief is in part an update on the defence science advisory board study entitled “Recruiting the Millennial Generation”, which is included as appendix 1 of my brief. I was chair of that study panel and wrote perhaps half of the final report. It was delivered in December 2013. While there has been some modest amelioration of the concerns expressed therein, the progress has been incremental at best.

For recruiting into the regular force, as you've heard from others, the processing times for applications to join are still unacceptably long, causing large numbers of the best candidates to take other offers. As a subset of that problem, the issuing of ROTP acceptances is so late that many good candidates have by then opted for other routes to higher education. These problems don't seem to bother some of the recruiters very much, as some of them see their role as plugging holes with acceptable applicants rather than getting the best people they can.

Reserve recruiting has benefited from some decentralization in recent years, which has somewhat shortened the waiting times, but more needs to be done.

On retention, major irritants are painfully long delays in component transfer between the reserve and regular forces and hugely demotivating training delays for new enrollees. In recent years, economy measures have constrained the formerly quite good access to professional development assistance while people serve. Some older ways of thinking about retention still prevail. Although, to be fair, many carrying out the human resource work in the Canadian Armed Forces today do understand that the best retention device is to be the best possible employer, but there remain additional steps along that road, which should be taken.

Most of the problems I've touched on here and which are treated at greater length in my brief stem from two entirely correctable problems. The first is a pervasive culture of risk aversion, probably reinforced from the top. The second is a dearth of capacity to carry out the work of recruiting and retention, with that dearth being both quantitative and qualitative. Even the most modest risk, such as issuing rapid conditional acceptances to the vast majority of low-risk applicants, could do wonders, but every time such measures are proposed or even tried on an experimental basis they rapidly disappear without a trace.

I'm certainly prepared to respond to questions about any of the 11 major numbered points of my five-page brief or any of the nine recommendations of the 22-page DSAB study, which is appendix 1.

On the important issue of gender balance in the Canadian Armed Forces, and on the experiences of women in the Canadian Armed Forces, I do have some data from my time as principal, RMC, which may be of interest to the committee. These data, from my own studies during the period of 1999 to 2008, were for me a remarkable affirmation of the impressive performance of the female officer cadets in the ROTP program and also explain for me some of the intake ratios we experienced. I'm certainly prepared to comment on those data, as well as answering any questions that fall within my area of competence.

Thank you very much.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Cowan.

The paper Dr. Cowan is referring to is still in translation, so there may be some limitations on your questions.

Mr. Doherty, you have six minutes, please.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests.

Mr. Cormier, you mentioned specializing our recruitment to match the skill sets of potential recruits. Are there countries that are doing that right now and that have better recruitment, higher recruitment, than what Canada has? Can you give us examples?

Dr. Yuri Cormier: I don't have access to that, unfortunately. I do know that one of the models you see elsewhere is choosing to recruit at different ages. In Canada, for example, if we go to RMC, we're going to be focusing our attention on trying to get someone who is in high school or 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds to join the forces, but if you look at other military academies like Sandhurst in the U.K., they're focusing their interest on people who already have a bachelor's degree and who are going to be more early to mid-twenties before they get into the officer training program.

That can have some positive elements as well in terms of maturity, but it also makes use of the civilian universities as a place where people get engaged with greater diversity than you might find at the RMC campuses, for example.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Are the cadet programs and the reserve programs still our main focus of recruitment or advertising for service?

Dr. Yuri Cormier: You'd have to ask a CMP that.

They are both streams. You're not going to get the bulk of your future officers through RMC. You get them through so many other sources, including civilian universities.

Mr. Todd Doherty: If we have a more concerted effort in our civilian post-secondary educational institutions, we may have a higher diversity of recruits. Is that correct? Is that your testimony?

Dr. Yuri Cormier: I didn't get your question properly.

Mr. Todd Doherty: That's okay.

Over the last decades, several efforts have been made to modernize—

The Chair: Professor Cowan is—

Mr. Todd Doherty: You made a comment that perhaps, by going outside of military educational institutions and going to civilian post-secondary institutions, we may be able to recruit more and more diverse candidates.

Dr. John Cowan: May I comment on that?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Absolutely.

Dr. John Cowan: The vast majority already come from civilian universities. If you look at the officer corps alone, more than three-quarters come through the direct entry route, which means people were recruited after they had already gotten their bachelor's degree.

Less than 25% come from the regular officer training plan, which includes undergraduates at the military colleges and ROTP undergraduates in civilian universities. The civilian university stream already represents perhaps 80% of the intake of the officer corps.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Over the last decade, several efforts have been made to modernize and strengthen the reserve force, a crucial element of our national security framework. However, after a decade of shifting policy of land force reserve restructuring, “Strong, Secure, Engaged” and the Canadian army's modernization strategy, many reserve units in my province, such as the Rocky Mountain Rangers, remain without a second mission element, hampering their ability to train and respond when called upon for domestic and international deployments.

If the Canadian Forces are looking to recruit new members, would it not make sense to invest in our reserve units?

I'll throw that question out to both of our witnesses.

Dr. John Cowan: If you'd like me to start, the problem, as I already indicated in my opening remarks, is that at the moment it's not the intake into the reserves, where the recruiting has been somewhat simplified in recent years after it was rather turgid for a long time. It is what happens if somebody then wishes to move from the reserve force into the regular force.

At one point, General Hillier announced that he was going to try to reform the system so that so-called component transfer could be accomplished in a week. It still takes anywhere between six months and a year and a half. That's completely unacceptable.

• (1650)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Go ahead, Mr. Cormier.

Dr. Youri Cormier: I would add to what Dr. Cowan just said. It's a lever at our disposition. If we're able to make it simple to go from one to the other, there's access to communities and there's access to diversity in the reserves that you're not going to get as easily in the regular forces. We need to really fix this bridge between the two sections of the career streams, because that's one of the best places we have to make gains.

Mr. Todd Doherty: You listed in your brief, which we still haven't been able to see because it's still at translation, a number of

steps and suggestions as to how we can modernize and be more efficient in our recruitment. I'm wondering if you would like to take some time to mention some of those.

Dr. John Cowan: I'm sorry, who is your question directed to?

Mr. Todd Doherty: We haven't seen your brief, as it's still in translation. You referred to it.

Dr. John Cowan: I'll answer very quickly, then, sir. I've touched on the first two points in the brief. The third point in the brief concerned the mindset of the Canadian Armed Forces recruiting group.

There was, however, a fourth point. Even people going the regular officer training plan route are required to select their military occupation much too early. That is to say, they select it at the moment of recruitment, when it would make a great deal of sense—and it makes sense for the Americans, who do it this way—for them to choose their occupation after they know a little more about which military occupation would make sense for them.

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave it there, Mr. Doherty.

I'm sorry to cut you off, Professor Cowan.

Ms. O'Connell, you have six minutes.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you both for joining us on this study.

Mr. Cormier, you mentioned the updated foreign policy and a defence policy that is well funded. Since this is the defence committee, I want to focus on the defence policy.

Could you elaborate on what you meant by a clear policy or vision you think doesn't exist? I understand the funding point of that, but could you elaborate on where you think this could be improved, more specifically?

Dr. Youri Cormier: I wouldn't comment so much on the defence policy as it's being written up, but I think the political community has a big role to play in being proud and being part of the brand that we're putting out there for the Canadian Armed Forces. I think that would go a long way in the recruitment efforts.

The other place where this plays out might have to do with the policy of the government. If you talk more about climate security, and if you talk more about other mission areas that will gather interest from a diverse set of Canadians, I think you're more likely to gain traction than if you focus the brand of the organization on its traditions and so forth.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

You spoke about interprovincial movements for employment and family members. In my other role, that is an area I can certainly raise with the minister. Could you elaborate on whether these are provincial interprovincial barriers, or are there specific federal regulations you would highlight, which I can flag and raise?

Dr. Yuri Cormier: Going back to what I mentioned in the opening remarks, it really comes down to facilitating conversations among provinces. I don't think that it's necessarily about a federal policy needing to be written, but a conversation among partners.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

Dr. Cowan, you spoke about data on women. Because we don't have access to your report, can you elaborate on what you were referring to, in terms of data on women in the service?

• (1655)

Dr. John Cowan: Yes. When I was still vice-principal of Queen's University, I was one of the seven members of the study group under General Ramsey Withers on the future of RMC in the late nineties. At that time, we were looking at these ratios, and the research strongly supported the notion that if the percentage of women in such an institution, including the American ones, was under 15%, the peer group wasn't large enough to be adequately supportive. A grey zone was 15% to 20%, and anything over 20% was reasonably safe.

When I arrived at RMC, the percentage of women officer cadets was in the low twenties. None of the American service academies, by the way, have yet to get above 20%. Over the first few years that I was there, it got up to about 29%, but then a strange thing happened. We became much more heavily engaged in Afghanistan, and the biases in the broader society obviously produced a situation in which parents counselled their children differently, and the ratio then fell back to somewhat below 25%.

Amongst the women officer cadets, they certainly garnered a higher than pro rata share of all the awards in all of the pillars of their activity, so I had to think a little bit about why this was so. Of course, research strongly suggested that in that 17-year-old to 24-year-old age group, women are more mature than men, so that was explicable. Also, of course, they were very highly motivated.

However, I became concerned about why the ratio was still so low. Queen's University is in the same city. I had at one point been vice-principal of Queen's University, so I thought I'd look at it a little more closely.

I realized that the disciplines in which there are degree programs at RMC didn't cover all of the disciplines at a typical civilian, large university like Queen's. I mapped what we had in terms of numbers onto the same disciplines at Queen's, and I found that using those disciplines and degree programs weighted, we would only have predicted 34% women, because there's still a broad societal bias, which I don't fully understand, about what women ought to do. I took that difference between 34%, and whether it was 28% or 29% or lower twenties, as being essentially, in a way, the military penalty. It did teach me that the appropriate comparison was not those rather too-low ratios and 50% or 52%, or whatever the civilian universities are experiencing, but given that group of disciplines, it was between somewhere in the twenties and the 34%.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

Madame Normandin, you have six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Cowan, I will start with you.

You mentioned some sort of pilot project that would fast-track applicants who were on a low security risk list. You said that it was effective, but still, the project didn't last and they didn't go ahead with the program.

Is this symptomatic of resistance to change in the forces? If so, is it really what needs to be addressed first? We could make the best recommendations in the world, but if the forces are not willing to change, it would be pointless to do that. I'd like to know how you feel about this.

[*English*]

Dr. John Cowan: That's a really good question. It's partly because the risk aversion comes all the way down from the political sector, where there's a risk of any embarrassment. You're also quite right that some of the risk aversion comes from some of the people in the recruiting group itself, people who to some extent are stranded there and who don't want any of the processes that they've developed, and are strongly married to, to be turned off, even if those processes don't have any very useful product.

It's a combination of risk aversion that comes down from a political level and risk aversion at the lower level. That could be corrected if we did some of the things that Professor Scoppio spoke to you about, in terms of valuing service in the recruiting group, giving it higher scores for promotion and so on, and ending up with a slightly different complement of people who are working in the recruiting group.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

My next question is for you, Dr. Cormier.

You started by saying that successful missions were important to attract more people. It also brings to mind local missions and everything related to Operation LENTUS. During the pandemic, we saw that Operation LASER was very well received.

In the past, I asked Professor Leuprecht the following question.

Would it be appropriate to set up some sort of parallel militia that would be more dedicated to national missions? We know that there will be more and more of them, especially because of climate change. This might be a solution to ensure universality in operations and combat training. It might be more appealing to some individuals who want to be of service but don't necessarily want to be called to fight overseas.

Dr. Youri Cormier: Here's what's interesting about that approach. If we had a civilian rather than military approach to dealing with domestic security issues in the event of climate shocks, if I can call them that, we could recruit a wider range of people and introduce them to domestic security without them having to jump directly into the military. The civilian structure could work together with the military structure.

There is tremendous potential indeed. The final argument for moving in this direction is cost. It's much cheaper to have civilians take on certain projects than use the military as the primary resource. The military should always be the last resource to be used. You always need to be prepared for other contingencies. If the military is always available to conduct domestic operations, it loses its ability to act quickly elsewhere in the world.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Shouldn't we still leverage the military aspect for its quick response time and operational capabilities, which cannot be outdone by the civilians. This could even be promoted, in a way, to attract more people to a different type of military work.

Dr. Youri Cormier: Promoting a different type of military work is just one way to convince more people with diverse personalities and character traits to join the Canadian Forces. Selling the idea that a soldier is someone who gets down on all fours in the mud will not convince cybersecurity and logistics experts and those in all the other areas that make an army work well.

It goes far beyond the 19th-century concept of the soldier that is so heavily ingrained in our vision of today's soldier.

Ms. Christine Normandin: You stated that a 2% budget increase could be used to build housing. Is this the approach you envision more for married military personnel who rent, or rather for soldiers who could buy and sell housing built by the forces?

Dr. Youri Cormier: I think those are both viable options. It depends on the availability of housing. If we have a shortage, we can't do either of those things well, but if we build it we will have the luxury of flexibility.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Fair enough.

Mr. Chair, I don't believe I have enough time left to ask another question. I will save it for the second round.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Again to pick up on the housing questioning, in terms of what you were discussing, are there any studies or further readings in terms of that housing idea that could be offered? Could you expand on what you were specifically talking about? You said that it would have to be built on base. Is this some-

thing that's been suggested before? Could you expand on that, Mr. Cormier?

• (1705)

Dr. Youri Cormier: Obviously, if you're building new housing for the military, what you're actually doing is allowing a bit of an offset to other places in the city where the arrival of military might increase the demand for housing. I'm not suggesting that this is a complete game-changer, but it is one of the little levers that we have at our disposition to make positive impacts on the housing crisis. Mostly, it's also an element that can play into this game of attracting people into the armed forces.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: One of the comments that we heard before was the removal of the post living differential. Could either of you talk about whether its reinstatement would be—if not a game-changer—helpful in terms of how the armed forces are trying to move and those expectations of members having to live in different places throughout their careers.

Dr. Youri Cormier: This one is over to John since he brought it up.

Dr. John Cowan: Actually, I hadn't talked about the differential, but certainly, during much of the time that I was involved with people being posted from one place to another, it was in place and it was highly useful. I certainly see the value in making it more prominent.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Professor, you had noted, when you were talking about that risk aversion, that there are now a lot of negative stories out in the media and in the Canadian news about the armed forces. Does that drive up that risk aversion, or do you feel that the armed forces could double down? Could you comment on that sort of progression to where we find ourselves now?

Dr. John Cowan: The risk aversion that I was speaking of is not really related to the issue of negative publicity of the type that exists now. It's a risk aversion about embarrassment due to possible individual cases of making a mistake in judgment. That's a problem that has become, I would say, rather more pervasive in all of government than Canadians are completely comfortable with. I don't think it's uniquely confined to the recruiting process within the armed forces.

However, there is a sufficiently severe problem with the armed forces that some political top cover...to say, "Just go ahead and take a few risks. If we get a little bit embarrassed here and there, that's fine. Just do your job, get better people, get more diverse people and get them now. If the odd ones have to be released after being in for a little while, because when the security clearance is finally processed it turns out that they wouldn't pass, big deal."

Dr. Youri Cormier: I was going to add that, if you're going to make little changes and reports that add up year after year...and this is one of the issues that came out in the news today, this frustration that these little changes don't add up and that the reports aren't getting implemented. If you want to make changes to this institution, you need to create shock treatments. You need sudden influxes of change, and you need that strong leadership and political oversight of the institution. If you just let it slide, one report at a time, it's going to get shelved.

You're not going to make an omelette unless you break a few eggs. I don't think we're there yet. I don't think there's that willingness to take that extra risk. You're not going to get it necessarily through the ranks, but if the political element forces down the question, you'll get somewhere.

Dr. John Cowan: There's one other thing which could help, if I could just add, and that's parallel processing. Rather than taking a candidate, checking one thing, then putting it further down the pipeline and checking another thing, and on and on, doing all those steps at one time, rather than waiting for each one to be cleared before you start the next one, would gain us a lot of time.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: One of the other ideas that has come before us is the idea of specialization, bringing in people from the private sector and ensuring they have those careers throughout the armed forces. Would there be a potential backlash, though, from those career military members who have worked their way through that seniority process? Do you see that as a problem or more overall as a positive?

Just a quick analysis of that from both witnesses would be great.

• (1710)

Dr. Youri Cormier: I'd argue that it's a solution, rather than a problem. If it hurts people along the way or frustrates people, that's too bad. I would take it up a notch. There needs to be an equalization of opportunities within the organization.

For example, if you had the pleasure of studying at RMC, you had access to almost 600 hours' worth of French language training or English language training. You don't get that if you arrive on a direct entry route. Maybe in some cases where there is potential and you have really great candidates, we should be pushing them toward language training to give them that chance to progress rapidly through the forces.

It's one of the reasons why people complain nowadays that when you look at very senior ranks, you see people who are all.... It's not all but many of them. There is an overrepresentation of former RMC cadets. People look at that and say that it's an old boys' club, or it's an incestuous kind of relationship that leads to promotions. However, there is that language element that people are forgetting to analyze as part of that progression.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Findlay, you have five minutes to crack a few eggs.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Dr. Cormier and Dr. Cowan, thank you very much for being here.

Dr. Cormier, the CDAI undertook a study on recruitment and retention. Is that correct?

Dr. Youri Cormier: Yes.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Were there any findings in your research that showed the composition of Canadian recruits to be any different from our NATO or western equivalents?

Dr. Youri Cormier: That was not really the topic.

The one report that you're referring to, which we did recently, gauged to what extent the new cycle of what people have been reading in the news around the CAF in the past two or three years has generated a decrease in the propensity to serve and recommend service. We found some demonstration that we need to do a better job weeding out problems and telling a positive story, if we're going to make sure that Canadians want to take part in the CAF.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: You addressed some of that in your opening remarks. Thank you for that.

Were there any basic assumptions you made that held up against your research? Did you find your research different from those assumptions, or did you more or less find it consistent?

Dr. Youri Cormier: For that I'd have to submit the report to the committee. This was a report that was not written by me and it was written two years ago, so I'm having a hard time recollecting the details of it.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Could you table that report with the committee, please? Thank you.

Do you think the current path being taken on reform now in the Canadian Forces will lead to a combat-ready force?

Dr. Youri Cormier: There's a long way to go, but I think you have the right pieces.

What we need to start thinking about is how we change the entry level to make sure that we're not perpetuating a culture that we don't want to see in the Canadian Armed Forces. There are a few ways to do this, and I'll give you an example. This is one thing that really upset me when I was teaching at RMC. I would have young women cadets come to my office and say, "I'm not staying the course. I'm going to get out of the forces in the next couple of years." I never got that from my male students.

There is an anecdotal element to it that's not a statistically significant piece, but I tried to figure out where it was coming from. There was the sense that you don't get it in other professions. I've never met a women engineer who says, "It's such a male-dominated domain that the culture is unbearable. I want out." What's happening in other male-dominated careers is that performance is measured objectively, whereas when you go to the military, you wind up with a performance measure that is not always objective. I'm looking specifically at the physical training systems and physical training exams, which are measuring upper body fitness or your capacity to do push-ups, for example.

When you're measuring these male-dominated qualities, rather than things like agility, endurance and those gender-neutral physical traits, you're creating an unfair premise of what it means to be a soldier. I'll give you an example. It takes 38 push-ups for women and 77 push-ups to get the right score. What happens behind the scenes is that you have these students getting a sense that they are twice the soldier that someone else is on campus, because they had to do twice as many push-ups to get that excellent score.

We were talking about royalty in the previous hour. If you want to get treated like royalty at RMC, you have to get 450 points on your physical test. You'll be part of the 450 club, you'll get a t-shirt, and the people who work in the physical training department will befriend you. There's a sense that you're very special if you're very good at this. When I was around, it was mostly young guys who were winning it.

• (1715)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I think where there are physical requirements—and there are in many career paths—this is something for which other places have sought some modifications to be more reflective. Having said that, would you agree that the reforms being undertaken still need to be geared to war fighting and combat readiness?

Dr. Youri Cormier: I think you have to have a very wide concept of what fighting readiness means, because someone in SOF-COM and someone in logistics don't necessarily need the same skill sets. When you want to recruit the best and the brightest cyber-soldiers, you don't necessarily want to recruit someone who's right out of high school, but someone who has demonstrated their strengths and capacities later in their career and who's working in the private sector and has access to all of this talent.

We are losing the talent game on cyber in a very big way, but there are remedies to this. Whether it's creating external hubs.... We see it in Russia all the time. It's not necessarily people who are working for the government, but working in parallel institutions. Whether or not we want to create this kind of setup or something a bit more directly within the armed forces, we still need to completely rethink how we're doing recruitment for this kind of skill set. It's something that you can't just take for granted.

This is a larger problem with the Canadian Armed Forces. We imagine people with this 30- or 40-year career plan, and we think we can take anyone who's very young and we'll train them to wherever we need to take them. The reality is we can't think that way—

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to get into that vision in another question. I apologize for cutting you off.

Mr. Spengemann, you have five minutes.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

Dr. Cormier and Dr. Cowan, thank you for being with us this afternoon.

I would like to start with an area we touched on but did not dive into with an in-depth assessment. That is the question of work satisfaction and the work environment.

A number of years ago, members of this committee had occasion to travel to Mali to look at the Canadian Forces' contribution to MINUSMA and the air medical evacuation mechanism, which is a state-of-the-art example. We had a crew of physicians and health care workers in the armed forces staffing the Chinook helicopters. There was extraordinary work and innovation with respect to bringing plasma further into the field, which results in a much higher survival rate for members of that mission who may come into peril.

How important is the work environment to retention? Could you talk a bit about the components of the work environment? I'm thinking specifically about training, including very complex multi-lateral and multinational training. How much of that is part of work satisfaction? In addition, could you comment briefly on overseas deployments?

I ask either or both of the witnesses.

Dr. John Cowan: I'm not sure how germane it would be, but I think satisfaction comes with accomplishment. Accomplishment comes from being adequately prepared to make that accomplishment.

You're already touched on the business of trying to draw in people who are mid-career and not drawing them in at the bottom. I have never understood the reluctance to do this. After all, it has always been done, for example, for physicians, who are not brought in at the lowest officer rank. Okay, that's a traditional high-skills occupation, but there are many modern high-skills occupations. Not only that, if you look at Canada's history, every time we have a really big emergency, like wartime, we bring in a lot of people laterally at the middle levels.

I think if we are a little more fluid about going after people who actually have the knowledge we want, greater job satisfaction will automatically follow.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Cormier, do you have a comment on training, deployment, overseas work, the typical peacekeeping operations work and components of that, and on how important the component of work satisfaction is?

• (1720)

Dr. Youri Cormier: Without data on that, I would prefer not to comment.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: All right.

Dr. John Cowan: I could make one small comment.

Most of my interlocutors who have discussed this sort of thing with me have said that it is a bit demotivating to spend much of your adult life preparing to do things you never actually do. The foreign deployments are critical in overcoming that negativity in people who have spent years preparing to carry out work they never actually do carry out.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you for that.

I'm going to be very careful in the way I phrase this. The demographics we're trying to bring into the Canadian Forces in larger numbers may come, or tend to come, from cultures where service in the armed forces has a stigmatizing, potentially negative and maybe even dangerous history.

To what extent are the Canadian Forces looking at the cultures we would like to see represented in greater numbers and doing some analysis on whether service in the armed forces is actually something those cultures would embrace? If not, how could the Canadian Forces reposition themselves to become a better employer of choice?

Dr. Youri Cormier: I would argue that there has been very focused attention on reaching out to certain communities, and on working with elders and those communities closely, and that it actually pays off. In Vancouver and Toronto, there are reserve forces that are very diverse as a result of this.

I don't think we need to worry too much. We need to do more of what we're already doing very well in certain regions of Canada.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you for that.

Let's do this very briefly, since I have 30 seconds.

The civil service is using the lateral entry model on the civilian side through the recruitment of policy leaders and other initiatives. There may be parallels for analysis. Have either of you looked at those and made the argument that it's already being done successfully on the civilian side, so why can't we do more on the military side?

Dr. John Cowan: I absolutely agree. There's no contest there.

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes, Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

Dr. Scoppio, who was on the previous panel, mentioned that the issue was not so much recruiting Francophones, but rather retaining them. Dr. Cormier, I was wondering if you had explored that in your study.

If you'd like to discuss this as well, Mr. Cowan, I'd be happy to hear your comments.

Dr. Youri Cormier: During my years in the Canadian Armed Forces, I never got the sense that less room was made for Francophones than Anglophones. However, I do agree that, to be polite, Quebecers often start speaking English as soon as an Anglophone says something. The phenomenon is not unique to the forces.

Still, I feel that more could be done to make both French and English speakers more comfortable. I wouldn't go so far as to say the situation caused Francophones to leave the forces or that it hurt recruitment efforts. I never felt that.

Ms. Christine Normandin: No studies have been done on the matter, however, whereas many have been done on the status of women, minorities, LGBTQ+ diversity and so on.

Would it be appropriate to do a study on the matter, given that Francophones remain a large group of potential recruits?

Dr. Youri Cormier: Absolutely. It makes me want to do it. I'm going to speak to my team about it.

Ms. Christine Normandin: That's wonderful.

I see that Mr. Cowan doesn't seem to want to add anything.

I will now go back to the question of culture. Dr. Cormier, you mentioned the t-shirt matter earlier. It made me think of a personal story. An acquaintance of mine who is in the military was brought in to train recruits. She told me that, unlike in her day, members of the military are no longer allowed to yell at one recruit, but they can yell at a group. This method is even recommended.

Should they change the way training is delivered, especially to recruits? Should the culture change right out of the gate?

Dr. Youri Cormier: That's not easy. I know the trend is towards not using the method where the sergeant yells at his recruits, as seen in the movie *Full Metal Jacket*. Also, in the military, people feel that the job at hand is extremely important and you can't compromise on the quality of that job. Do you need to yell to get it done? It may not be necessary, but the job certainly requires standards and rigour that leave no room for compromise, and yelling is one way to foster exceptional professionalism.

I believe that's the point of this method. Is it the best method? Maybe there are other methods too. At the end of the day, it's important not to compromise on quality.

• (1725)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

Ms. Mathysen is next.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: There are a lot of comments around not reinventing the wheel and on how there were lots of programs that the military started with but that they maybe didn't continue on with. Maybe you could both comment on that.

There has been a recommendation, of course, and a full implementation of the women in force program. That was a pilot project. Could you comment on that and its effectiveness?

Also, the armed forces used to send recruiters into first nations rural and remote communities and they had a lot of good response to that, but that has declined. Would that also be something to go back to in terms of that recruitment and retention piece?

Dr. Youri Cormier: One of the challenges—

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: That's for both of you, by the way.

Dr. Youri Cormier: I'll start with the rural one. It's an important question, because historically that has been the place where you go to find lots of recruits quickly: rural Quebec and rural New Brunswick. Those are places that historically were providing a lot of military.

Unless you rethink how you're doing recruitment and advertising, there are just not that many young people in those parts of Canada, compared to the number of young people who are currently in the Toronto or Vancouver areas. There are parts of Canada we're not recruiting enough from as a result of having models of recruitment that might be slightly outdated and that are not in line with the current demographics in certain regions of Canada that historically were providing a lot of recruits.

Dr. John Cowan: From the list, I would say there remain communities—and this was touched on a few minutes ago—where there are concerns that parents have about letting their children align with what looks like an authority structure in this society. This is true of new arrivals in Canada. This is true in certain other communities.

The recruiting system is used to just dealing with the applicants, and Youri is absolutely right. To start to make inroads into those groups, those entities, it's important that the recruiting system also engage the community leaders and the parents. It's not enough just to deal with the applicants to change attitudes about people joining what the social world they're in may see as an authority structure they're not comfortable with.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Gallant, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you very much.

Very quickly, please just answer yes or no to the questions.

Training is done through the private sector for veterans as they transition, and I think you've said that there wouldn't be a problem with training our recruits for cyber the same way. It's done right here in Ottawa at Willis College.

What about the idea of compulsory service, for example, a paid summer service by a high school graduate or someone in university? Is that of any use to open up to diversity and all these other aspects, yes or no?

Dr. Youri Cormier: I think voluntary armies have historically been very effective. I wouldn't want to go towards a conscription model unless there's a crisis.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Aside from military college being paid for through ROTP, at one time, I believe, there was funding of a university education by the military with a promise or a requirement of service for a set number of years afterwards. Right now, this only applies to going to military university.

Is there any—

Dr. John Cowan: That's not true. There are hundreds of people who are subsidized going through the regular officer training program in civilian universities. The ROTP is not just in the two military colleges. The system that you're referring to still exists.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is that for more than just doctors and dentists? I know that they sign up.

Dr. John Cowan: Yes, there are large numbers.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay, so we—

Dr. Youri Cormier: I was going to add to that. On the question of ROTP, when you go to RMC, you're subsidized on a half-a-million-dollar scholarship. What's kind of sad in all of this is that, when we talk to admissions officers and professors who are currently in those institutions, they've regularly told me that they have a sense that they're having to go deeper into the barrel to find the candidates. They're not getting the right recruits, and the quality of the people who are in, year after year, has been on the decline.

If we're still spending half a million dollars to get subpar potential officers or mediocre arrivals.... Obviously that's not the majority of people, but when you look at a classroom and you have five or six who are very poor, you wonder how on earth they got themselves a half-a-million-dollar scholarship as well as five years of pensionable work in the military.

• (1730)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

Dr. Youri Cormier: We have to find a way to limit how deep we go into the barrel.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You just answered my next question, which was whether or not we needed a military college, but if we're diving deep into the barrel now, then I guess that's a no.

I believe at one time there were seats set aside in medical school for doctors. I'm not sure whether or not that was the case—I'd like to know if it was—and would it be beneficial to have x number of seats set aside for the military?

Right now you have to qualify to medical school in order to have it paid by the military, but if it were the other way around and you had people at RMC who qualified or who wanted to become doctors, but the competition is just too great for them to do so.... Is there a way? Would it be productive?

We're short of doctors all across Canada. When they're done their military careers, they can serve in the private sector as well. Would it be feasible to have, say, at Queen's University, an additional number of positions at medical school set aside specifically for the military?

Dr. John Cowan: There already are. I had a hand in overhauling the so-called military medical training program some years ago at a point when the Canadian Armed Forces were extremely short of physicians. They weren't getting into the medical schools. The military medical training program existed, but the applicants weren't getting in. They were getting to the point of being interviewed, but they then would not engage in the self-aggrandizement at interviews that seems necessary to get into one of the Canadian medical schools.

I and some of my colleagues negotiated supernumerary positions both at the University of Ottawa and at Queen's University. The University of Ottawa was chosen because it's bilingual. I think there were four positions at the U of O and a couple at Queen's. If people got to the interview stage, that is to say that they met the academic requirement to go to medical school, and they were already in the armed forces, we would be able to pay for them to go through as supplementary positions.

The interesting thing was that, as soon as we did that, all of a sudden, huge numbers of people started being successful getting in to the regular quotas in the medical schools. What had happened was that people in the armed forces had been demotivated about applying to the MMT program because they figured that nobody would back them up. As soon as the department went ahead and made a few subsidized positions, all of a sudden, a lot of the top people who could do it applied and got in to the regular medical school stream.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Gallant.

Self-aggrandizement in the medical school...what a concept. My goodness.

I think it's Mr. May for the final five minutes.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of you for helping us round out this study.

We've heard a number of times, and with other witnesses as well, that the effect of life in the forces on family is part of the issue with retention and likely part of the issue with recruitment when candidates are evaluating whether or not this is the right career for them.

It would seem that this is inherently part of military life. Can we do something to lessen that impact on the family?

Mr. Cowan, maybe we'll start with you.

Dr. John Cowan: One suggestion that I put in my brief, which will eventually come out of translation, is that there remains more to be done in making sure that, when people qualify for a particular trade within the armed forces, the qualification is also the certification that's required to carry that out in a civilian setting. That's part of being a good employer, so that people know that, if the situation arises where a particular move just isn't possible, perhaps because of a spouse's occupation, their employer has protected them.

The old concept of retention, where you build a fence around people so they can't get out, is not really very logical.

Being a good employer would include some of these things. To be fair to the department, they've done that for many of the non-commissioned member trades in recent years, but there's a lot more to be done.

• (1735)

Mr. Bryan May: Canada, of course, is a uniquely large country and a low-density country. Does that play a role in the challenges associated with relocation of family, base location and those sorts of things?

That's for Mr. Cowan, but Mr. Cormier might like to jump in on that one.

Dr. Yuri Cormier: To me it's a clear "yes" that it would have an impact, but to what extent do we...? You're not going to move bases any time soon.

When it comes to family, most of the folks in the military that I know actually have a family. Working in the military hasn't been a total impediment to having a good family life, but whether or not we can do little things.... Sometimes it's just having that flexibility built into the system where if someone's spouse needs to go somewhere in the military and they can't do it, they would be able to leave the military for a year. They could just say that they'll be out for a couple of seconds, but they'll be right back in. That can help.

As long as there's flexibility built into a career in the forces, you'll find all kinds of ways to give satisfaction to the members of the forces and make sure they always want to come back—that they can't wait to come back.

Mr. Bryan May: We've talked a lot about different adaptations and things the military is trying to do.

I'm going to ask this of both of you.

What should be our first step? What one single step could we take right now—today—that needs to be done before anything else?

Dr. Yuri Cormier: I'd start by leveraging civil society. There are organizations like mine, like CDA Institute. Why are we not having regular conversations and bringing DND to have access to our base?

We have people all across the country. Tens of thousands of subscribers and students in every university across the country are part of our community. There are missed opportunities to leverage organizations like our own and others. These could help with recruitment and access to these communities that are being targeted.

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Cowan.

Dr. John Cowan: Mr. May, I don't think there's a single silver bullet for this, but I do list 11 things in the brief that will eventually come to you. They're sort of at the top of my hit parade. Some of them are actually not very difficult. It would be great if a significant number of them could be done.

Mr. Bryan May: This will probably be my last question, Mr. Chair.

To follow up on that, Mr. Cowan, I asked this of the earlier panel. Are any of our allies or any countries around the world doing a good job with recruitment and retention? Are there any that we could and should be looking at to see if we can adapt those choices they've made for the Canadian Armed Forces?

Dr. Yuri Cormier: I think Ukraine is doing a great job of recruiting people, not only nationally but internationally. It comes down to what I was saying in my opening remarks: If you have a noble purpose and success in your missions, I think you can really convince a lot of people to join you.

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Cowan.

Dr. John Cowan: I was involved in some retention studies a few years ago. I don't think we're doing too badly on retention. I think that the area of the biggest deficit is on the recruiting end. When you see my recommendations, you'll see that, while there are some recommendations on retention, I don't think our deficit there is as severe.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you to both of you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Again, we've had an outstanding panel. We particularly appreciate Dr. Cowan and Dr. Cormier and their thoughtful interventions and contribution to our study.

We'll let you go at this point.

Colleagues, please hang on before I adjourn.

We had General Eyre coming on Wednesday. He's told us that he's travelling with the minister and is not available.

We still have a full panel of four witnesses. That would end our commitment, and we will be out of witnesses at that point. I need guidance from you as to whether that's the end of this particular study and we start on the aid to civil authority study, or whether we ask General Eyre for another opportunity to talk to him. These are the dilemmas we are in.

On Monday, we need to have committee time to talk about a variety of committee issues for at least an hour, and/or start the study on aid to civil authority, or continue on with this study. Please indicate your preference to me at some point.

Cheryl.

• (1740)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: CDS Eyre is helpful in anything we're doing, no matter what study we're in. When he's able to be here, we will maximize his presence with whatever we have at hand.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Kerry-Lynne.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: My thought was that we should ask the CDS if maybe he could be here on Monday, as he can't be here on Wednesday, and for some of the discussions we were planning to have on Monday, perhaps we could use some of that time on Wednesday.

I realize you won't have an answer for that right now, Chair. However, it seems that, on the crucial issue of retention and recruitment, we should hear from the CDS as to what his plans are and how he sees his role in facilitating that, if possible.

The Chair: Yes. We'll try to recruit General Eyre for Monday.

Christine.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Like Ms. Gallant, I feel it's always helpful to have the chief of the defence staff appear before the committee. We can use his time to ask him a variety of questions, as we've done in the past. If he comes here to testify about additional

funding, we could ask him about retention, or we could ask him about our next study, depending on what information we want. His testimony would be helpful for all of our studies.

[*English*]

The Chair: It's hard to imagine leaving the retention and recruitment study without, if you will, the head guy of the organization, so yes, I tend to agree with that.

Bryan.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of course, in an ideal world, if we could get the CDS at a later date, that's great. I just don't want to lose the day.

We are tight in terms of timeline and what we have left to accomplish in this committee before the summer. If you look at the lineup of people the defence department has suggested could come on Wednesday, these are very capable subject matter experts—generals. I'm sure we could get a lot from them.

My recommendation is that we move ahead on Wednesday's meeting. If we can bring General Eyre in at a later date, great, but I wouldn't suggest delaying the study.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: I understand the role of the parliamentary secretary. I understand that Bryan is fulfilling that role, but the CDS—

Mr. Bryan May: With respect, those are all subject matter experts—

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Excuse me, I'm speaking. The chair recognized me.

With respect, the CDS has a central role. He has the main role. All we're asking is to see... He was supposed to be here on Wednesday, and the minister's travel plans came up very quickly, in fact after close of business on Friday. The importance of trying to hear from the CDS I don't think can be underestimated. If we're going to start asking questions about other things as well, and the budget, putting it all together, we're going to need more than an hour of his time, which is all I was really speaking to.

Thank you for letting me have the floor, as I was recognized by the chair.

The Chair: Good. Thanks, all the way around.

If in fact we're not able to arrange anything on Monday, I will need witnesses, either on retention recruitment or on the aid to civil authority study.

Cheryl.

• (1745)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I understand that the subcommittee met. Would you care to share the conclusions drawn on travel?

The Chair: We didn't draw any conclusions, so there's really, at this point, nothing to share. It's quarter to six, and I don't want to hold people in a public forum and talk about it, to be candid with you. We did have a very constructive meeting. We're narrowing ourselves down to a point.

With that folks, I appreciate your patience. The meeting's adjourned.

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