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# **Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, February 3, 2005**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Pat O'Brien**

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## Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs

Thursday, February 3, 2005

• (0900)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.)):** I would like to call to order the 17th meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs.

Today we are resuming the committee's study on the matter of the procurement of four submarines from the U.K. and the process by which that took place. We're investigating the political decision-making, the aspect of training, the retrofit of those subs, and so on.

Hopefully the committee is coming toward the end of its work. Tentatively, we hope to have a draft report by the end of February and to have it formally presented in the House by mid-March at the latest, holding and reserving the option to issue an amended report should we see the need.

I would just note that this committee would like to have access to the board of inquiry report at such time as it's able to get that. We know that board has been reconvened by the admiral, so I anticipate that it will be some time before we might have access to that report.

That just sets up where the committee is headed over the next month or six weeks.

Today we have two parts to the meeting. First, we have an important witness for our study, former commander Peter Kavanagh, retired from the Canadian Forces in May 2002 after a 20-year career in the navy, including 17 years in submarines. I know he'll be able to add to our study here today.

I'm proposing, colleagues, that we have Mr. Kavanagh make an opening statement if he wishes. I'd ask him to keep it to 10 minutes at most.

You don't have to do that. It's your choice, sir. Following that, we'll do our normal questioning.

We have some other important work to do, so I'm suggesting that at around 10 o'clock or 10:30 at the latest, we would finish with Mr. Kavanagh. We would then go on to the second phase of the committee's business.

With that, Mr. Kavanagh, on behalf of SCONDVA, the committee, I welcome you. If you would like, please make any opening comments.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh (As Individual):** I don't have any opening comments. I'm here only to answer any questions that you have.

**The Chair:** That's fine. That gets right to the heart of the matter. MPs love to ask questions, so we'll go directly to them now.

We're starting with Mr. O'Connor, please.

**Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Kavanagh, welcome to our committee. I've looked forward to having you here, because two of the tracks I've been trying to follow in this inquiry are the procurement process and the training process. For me, potential problems in the training process are as important as those in the procurement process.

I have requested documents—and they're still not here, for various reasons—on submarine training plans. I assumed, maybe incorrectly, that the navy, when it has submarines, would have some kind of coherent submarine training plan. I asked for such plans in the past for the Oberons and I've asked for them for the current submarines. Could you confirm one way or another whether the navy orients its training in the sense that it has training plans for submarines, separate from frigates, etc.?

• (0905)

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** The short answer is yes.

One of the issues in the Canadian submarine service—and not just for this procurement but historically, at least for the last 20 years, if not more—is that the navy we have is a surface ship navy primarily, and it happens to have submarines. Many of the policies, like training, like personnel, were arbitrarily thrown onto submarines and didn't always fit. Training has always been an issue in terms of receiving somebody in the submarine community who has had all sorts of training on surface ship equipment.

Historically, much of the training we had to do was practical, hands-on, at-sea training, because there was no training infrastructure ashore, or very little. That has changed in the last number of years. The navy is now procuring trainers and those sorts of things.

So the issue that you touch on didn't start in the late nineties. It has been going on for years and years.

**Mr. Gordon O'Connor:** The other perception I have—and perhaps you can confirm it, because you've been with the submarine service for some time—is that as the O-boats, the Oberons, reached near the end of their life, I understand they were basically pulled into port and that there was no sea training done in the latter years of the Oberons. We then had a gap until we acquired the new class of submarines.

Could you describe for me what happened to the standards of professionalism in training during those years, in your opinion?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Let's start around 1996. That was a time when we in the submarine community knew this Victoria class procurement was in the works and we knew we couldn't run the O-boats forever. There was a period of a number of years when the money to run the O-boats started to dry up. The policies in terms of personnel and training were basically put into abeyance and put on hold, because everyone was waiting for the announcement to make the conversion over to the Victoria class.

As I recall, I think we needed about 290 trained submariners to undertake the conversion training in the U.K., and this was part of the way this whole program was structured. As early as 1997 we knew we were in trouble. We didn't have anywhere near that number of submariners, but because the entire navy was in crisis—never mind submarines—in terms of personnel and training and all those sorts of things, those issues were not resolved.

In 1998, when the project was announced, we were about 100 submariners short. The navy knew that the edge of the precipice had been coming for a number of years, but the issue just had not been resolved. There just was not the resource or management commitment, or whatever it was. We were then in a position where we were contractually required to send 288 submariners or whatever the number was, to the U.K., and those were fully qualified, dolphin-wearing submariners.

The Royal Navy had determined that it was just going to provide conversion training, not submarine training, so we tied up *Ojibwa*, which was an old O-boat, and conducted practical training alongside. We call that fast cruising. You simulate being at sea and you start fires and floods and those sorts of things. We turned *Onondaga* into a training platform, and for little over a year *Onondaga* went to sea with one mission, and one mission only, and that was to produce new submariners. Those submariners got, on average, five days' sea time before being qualified.

To put that into perspective, when I qualified in submarines in 1986, my at-sea program was twelve months long, but I completed it in eight months. That was hard sea time. You don't just build a submariner overnight. I don't know what the appropriate amount of sea time is today, because we now have more simulators and we do more shore training. In my time, when I went through, there was very little shore training, but now there is a lot more. But there has been no rational sit-back to study this process and determine what the requirement is. This has all been driven by contractual obligations or by whatever the number of submariners is that it takes to get these submarines to sea. We started there and then we worked back, and that's how the training has been done.

Because of that, the experience levels have degraded considerably in the submarine community. In 1999-2000, there were still a fair number of old O-boat people around who had some experience. For these people who were pumped through, it's not their fault at all. They're fine sailors, fine officers; they just don't have the experience. There are more and more of them with very little experience.

At the time, there was an argument that we just had to get through this hump and when we got to sea we would sort it out, people would get more experience, and the training levels would take care

of themselves. Of course, that hasn't happened because of all the delays and mismanagement in the program. Now what we have is an entire submarine community that is not experienced, and the practical at-sea training has suffered as a result.

**Mr. Gordon O'Connor:** When we were in Halifax—and you alluded to it—while we were hearing these stories about sea time, we were told by the navy that the previous practices were a bit outdated, that we now have simulators, and that with these simulators they can do pretty well everything they want to do ashore, with only a little bit of sea time. What's your opinion?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** That's absolutely not true. I am a full believer in the power of simulators and simulator training, but we're not there yet.

The navy has a number of simulators. One is called the ship control trainer, and that's very good to train the people sitting in those particular duty positions in the submarine to respond to emergencies, like fires, floods, and what have you. We have another simulator that is a more tactical simulator, called the SOTT, and that is for periscope work and that sort of thing.

• (0910)

There is no simulator that takes a crew, puts it together, and trains it to respond to any type of emergency, wherever it is in a submarine. There is no simulator for firefighting or damage control. The surface ships have one, and there is a damage control school, but when submariners go out to conduct firefighting training and damage control training, what they do is take the portable firefighting equipment that is fitted on the submarines and they practise putting out pan fires. That is not a realistic simulation of what you need to deal with in a submarine, as we tragically know now.

In time we may get there, and I would accept the navy's argument, but right now I absolutely do not agree with that assessment.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. O'Connor.

[Translation]

Mr. Bachand, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Kavanagh, you retired in 2002—I believe that it was in May. It seems that...

[English]

**The Chair:** Sorry. I should have alerted the guest to get his translation earpiece ready.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Mr. Kavanagh, according to the documentation I have read, you retired in May 2002. At the time, the Navy Commanding Officer, who was Admiral Buck, would have told you that your attitude was typical of the old school. Did Admiral Buck tell you that when you insisted on having sea training?

• (0915)

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** The “old school” comment was not from Admiral Buck; that was from Admiral MacLean, and I was not present when he said that. That was in response to the comments I made publicly about the level of training. They were dismissed as comments from an old-school submarine captain. Those were the words he used.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Would you say that you quit the navy because you could not agree with Admiral MacLean about training? Would you say that?

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** My decision to resign was a complicated one. It was for personal and professional reasons. It wasn't just the training levels, it was the mismanagement of the program on the coast in the formation of MARLANT. It was my inability, as the officer in charge of submarine sea training, to effect any change. I was being bypassed. It was my primary responsibility to make sure the crews were safe at sea. Because of the decisions that were being made around me, I found myself in a position where I could not do that.

I also have to say to the committee that I did not resign on principle, I did not write a memo explaining my reasons to resign. There is a history there. I was the officer who had been standing up for years and saying, whoa, what about this? It gets pretty lonely after awhile, and I started to have self-doubts; I thought perhaps there was something wrong with me. All those things were going on in my mind as I resigned.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** You seem to say that the program was mismanaged and that you were by-passed. Do you think that the young submariners that you trained would have rallied to your point of view rather than that of the Chief of Staff?

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes, the seagoing community was very frustrated because nobody was getting up and calling a spade a spade. I had, and still have, tremendous support as a result of what I did then and because of what my public comments in the last year have been.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** A few minutes ago, you referred to the mismanagement of the program. Could you give us some examples of the way the training given to submariners was not up to par in your own view of the training required?

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** As an example in terms of things going over my head, I have to say that I was a lieutenant-commander. The people who made the decisions were of a higher rank than I was, but I was the sea trainer and was directly responsible for a lot of the safety issues.

When the submarines came back from the U.K., they were on a certificate that allowed them to transit across the ocean safely. The

original plan was that they would then be tied up or immediately go into a Canadian work period lasting six months. On completion of that, they would come out and start what we call the work-up process, where the sea trainers go on board and start very slowly with single drills, progress, take them to sea, train the crews in fire and floods, and work those crews up.

Because of all the delays in the U.K., the training issues that we're talking about were exacerbated even further, and the navy understood that we had to get submarines out to sea to train people. We went through a risk process and determined that, provided that the submarines stayed very close to Halifax, we could do that safely, and there were escape and rescue policy issues, personnel issues, and continuity issues and so forth.

The formation, MARLANT, arbitrarily decided to order *Windsor* into an international exercise off the Virginia coast without going through any risk assessment process, totally bypassing the sub safe rules and regulations that had been put into effect by the naval command here in Ottawa at the CMS, and without any consultation with the people who were dealing with these issues every day—particularly me, being front and centre, but not just me. I found out the submarine was going there at the same time as the captain of the submarine, who didn't know. We were sitting together and we read the message at the same time. He had no idea. That stunned me. I ended up having to go to CMS, over my formation commander's head, and the plan was immediately scrapped. But that episode convinced me that I could not do my job.

In terms of mismanagement, I'm talking primarily about the Canadian work period. This happened because the submarines were procured within a funding envelope. Within that funding envelope, we could not afford the maintenance bill and we couldn't afford to buy spare parts. When the submarines came back to Canada to enter the CWP, the Canadian work period, at the time the navy was scrambling to send ships over for Operation Apollo. The FMF, the fleet maintenance facility, simply did not have the capacity or the capability to do both jobs. Instead of admitting that—and I went to these briefings every week—the maintenance people would brief the admiral that everything was on track, everything was green, there were no reds. Meanwhile, there was literally no work being done whatsoever on the boats. The admiral of the day, who was Admiral MacLean, was surprised and embarrassed repeatedly by delay after delay that he was not being told about until the eleventh hour.

• (0920)

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** You were responsible for the design, the implementation and the preparation of the exercise scenarios which were included in a training kit. Were you given the opportunity to prepare those kits or did your senior officers interfere and tell you that they preferred using other kits rather than yours?

My last question is the most important. Do you think that submariners now in service have received all the training necessary to do their job or do you think that their inadequate training might compromise their work on submarines?

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I was not hindered that way, but I resigned because of the delays before I went to sea to do that job.

In terms of whether submariners are trained properly or not now, the training they get ashore is excellent training. There's no question about that. But it is my contention that you cannot call a crew worked up and able to go out to do what it needs to do unless the crew members have a level of sea time. That is absolutely lacking, and it's not going to get fixed until the boats get to sea again.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Bachand.

[English]

Mr. Blaikie, please, for seven minutes.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Kavanagh.

You spoke earlier about how some of the things you were unhappy about were being driven by contractual obligations. Could you expand on that?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I had nothing to do at all with the way this deal was set up. Even as a person in uniform, I had nothing to do with the initial inspections of the boats. I was a seagoing submariner trying to keep everybody safe in O-boats—and I wasn't the only one, of course.

The way this program was sold to us essentially was that we would go over there, do conversion training, kick the tires, reactivate the boats, bring them back home, and go off and do our thing, fully worked up. It was almost to be like leasing a car: go pickup the keys, kick the tires, take off, and get onto the freeway.

Because we had such a steady state of personnel and training issues in O-boats—and it just got worse in the late nineties because we were waiting so long for this decision—and the navy itself was in crisis, we could not meet the contractual obligations. The contractual obligation was to provide that number of submariners. I think it was 288 fully qualified and trained submariners; I might be wrong, but it was around there somewhere. So then the debate started about what was a fully qualified and trained submariner. What we did was change the gatepost on that.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** So this is what the Brits required in the contract before they would give you the submarines?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes, before they would accept people for conversion training. They were adamant about that. They would not take non-qualifieds. They had to be fully qualified submariners.

• (0925)

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** For the training that was taking place in the U.K.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Correct.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** You referred to this exercise the *Windsor* was sent on without your being consulted or, for that matter, without your being—

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** She was not sent on it, but she was ordered to go.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** She was almost sent on it.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** Where did that originate? Where did that decision come from?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** It came from Maritime Forces Atlantic. At that time, to be fair, I will also have to say that we had just set up the Sub Safe Organization because we were trying to do this properly. The Sub Safe Organization was part of CMS. When MARLANT made that decision, there was no consultation and that was ignored. I don't know why, because I wasn't involved in those discussions.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** When you're talking about sea training, I'm certainly sympathetic to your view that there's nothing like hands-on experience and that simulations only go so far. How would you simulate or how do you train for a fire at sea? You don't actually have a fire, do you?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** No.

I have years of experience in doing this. We have a machine we call Misty. If you can think of a 1970s disco with the mist coming up from the ground, that's what it does. It puts non-toxic smoke into the environment. That's still benign, it's safe to consume, so you cannot simulate the true horror of a fire. I've never gone through anything like *Chicoutimi* did, but I have responded to two fires in my career at sea, and the smoke is not something you can simulate completely. We can only do as much as we can.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** You talked about Operation Apollo getting in the way of what needed to be done. Could you expand a bit on how that affected things?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** In the mid-nineties to the late nineties, the maintenance facilities were gutted as part of the 25% reduction in defence spending, so their capacity was reduced by about 50%. They simply did not have the resources to do both jobs.

At that time, it seemed there were five or six number one priorities in the navy. Every time we turned around, there was another number one priority, so it was very frustrating for everybody because we didn't have the resources to do all the jobs that were being given to us by command and by the government.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** But at the time, a lot of what was happening was happening in the U.K. Are we saying we didn't have the resources to do what was needed to be done in the U.K. as part of the conversion, or was it something on this side of the Atlantic that we weren't able to do?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** It was this side. There were certainly extensive delays in the U.K. because of the reactivation issues that came up, and by and large, I understand the British government had to pay for that. It affected us in that we had to keep sailors over there for extended periods, not just the six months. But recall that when the boats came back the concept called for a six-month work period in a Canadian dockyard to change out the weapons system, for instance.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** That's what was affected by the....

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** It just seems like a program that is plagued by delays of one kind or another. You have the delays on the U.K. side because there were a lot more problems with the submariners being reactivated, and we had the initial delay of the political decision about whether we should buy the submarines or not: "Well, we should buy them, but let's not buy them now. Let's buy them later". You have that delay, and then you have the delay on the U.K. side because of reactivation problems, some of which you might have had anyway and some of which were aggravated by the fact that they sat in dry dock for so long. Then there were delays on the Canadian side. It just seems to me to be one delay after another, for one reason or another.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes. A lot of it was not in anybody's power to change and it couldn't be predicted. A lot of it could have been predicted and should have been predicted. A very large part of this whole saga is that we bought the submarines for \$750 million, or whatever it was, and we deliberately did not buy the spares we needed because we didn't have the money for that. We got the decision, we had to get the boats home, and those issues were going to be sorted out for another day. So we didn't buy the spares we knew we would need. We didn't look at the maintenance requirements of these boats, and they are significant. They are twice or three times more than...four times even, because of the maintenance doctoring to them. In addition to that, for this particular project, we didn't stand up a project office. We brought them home and tried to manage it within the matrix of National Defence Headquarters. That simply has not worked.

• (0930)

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** You didn't buy the spares. These spares were available in the U.K. and they weren't bought?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I'm not sure about that. Probably some of them were not available, but some were available. We just didn't buy them because they didn't fit the funding envelope.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** What kinds of things?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Valves and that sort of thing.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** Why is the maintenance of the Upholder that much more expensive than the O-boats?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** It is because of the design concept of the submarine. It's far more complicated. The O-boats were mechanical beasts. They were great submarines, but it was 1950s technology built in the 1960s. The Upholder systems are very complex. They wear out a lot more easily and therefore they require all this planned maintenance.

**The Chair:** Last question, Mr. Blaikie, please.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** It's sort of like the difference between my old 1962 Pontiac and the car I have now.

Mr. Chairman, I have no more questions.

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

Now we come to this side, seven minutes for Mr. Martin, please.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Thank you, Commander Kavanagh, for being here today. We appreciate your presence.

You said the land training is excellent for our submariners and it was your belief that the crews need more sea time. How much more sea time would be required to train the submariners, in your professional view, say, in the context of knowing that we have this new land training that is excellent?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I can't put a number to that because I don't have first-hand experience of what the levels are right now. I'm two years out of the game. I do talk very regularly with members of the community.

Really, that depends on a lot—whether all the simulators that are coming online come online; it depends on the level of experienced people in each crew, and I can't answer that.

I will say that in 1998 when we knew this was coming, we sat down in a course training development board and tried to determine what it would take to make a bare-bones safe submariner to fulfill this requirement. We talked about sea time at length. What we didn't want was somebody getting dolphins with no sea time at all, and the way the documentation was written, that was possible. We came up with some numbers. It was 21 days for an officer and 7 or 10 days for an enlisted person, but those numbers were removed from that documentation by whoever before it was published.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** That was an opinion of the group. It decided that would be reasonable.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** The subject matter experts of the community, yes.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** That brings to mind the training in Great Britain on the Upholders. Do you know what the training requirements were, the sea time requirements for the U.K. submariners?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** They had a qualification package that was six months reduced to four, I believe. I'm not sure, but I think that's what they were doing. It was traditionally six months, and I think they reduced it to four.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** On these particular subs?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Well, it depends, because the U.K. also runs nuclear submarines. There were two streams of people in the Royal Navy: one that came up through the conventional side and one that came up through the nuclear side.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Just to keep with apples to apples, because that's a very good point, I'm speaking about the Upholder class, not the nukes.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Understood, but if somebody was a nuclear submariner and posted to an Upholder, he would have to do a different conversion package from somebody who was in an O-boat and went to an Upholder. I don't know what the times for those would be.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Okay. That leads into my next question. You're an O-boat commander who has 17 years of experience on O-boats. How much of the experience that you have on an O-boat is transferrable to diesel-electric subs?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** To the Upholder, the Victoria, you mean—

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Correct.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** —because they're both diesel-electric submarines.

A fair bit of it. Just to put it into context, I served my career in O-boats but I passed my command qualifying course in a Dutch submarine. I guess the approach I took was the thing has a periscope, it has a sonar, it has something in back to make me go. That's a very simplistic version, but in order to drive the submarine that's what I needed.

In terms of knowing the systems, it was considerably different. I went to the U.K. for a year and trained on the Victoria-class submarines, and it was markedly different.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** What we're trying to ascertain, of course, as you well know, is whether there are any flaws in our training for personnel—not for a commander like you. So if you have a population of submariners that worked on the Oberons, how much more training would be required, specifically sea time, for that group of people to be able to be safe and functional on the Victoria-class subs?

● (0935)

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** My personal opinion is that if you take a trained Oberon crew and then do the conversion training, which takes three months, with a three- or four-week period at sea, I would be quite comfortable that the crew could do anything you asked them to do.

When we first looked at the submarines there was an idea out there that the inexperienced people would actually have less trouble than the experienced people, because it was all new stuff. It was generations ahead of what we had been used to in O-boats. There is some merit to that. So in terms of operating the systems, you can get a lot of that done alongside and you can learn the systems without all that O-boat experience. But what we lack is the intuitive reaction when something out of the ordinary happens, when something goes wrong. You can't expect somebody with five days' sea time to immediately put a smoke curtain down and shut a bulkhead door without thinking. That just comes with time and practice. I could give several examples like that.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Sorry to interrupt you, but the argument would be put forth by some that the land training—and I think this is what we're trying to parse out.... How much of the land training is adequate, in combination with your sea training, to ultimately, at the end of the day, have a safe submariner, which is what we all want?

What we're trying to determine is in this sort of new age, different sub, how much more is required in terms of the sea training that would be required in combination with this new—as you said—excellent land training to produce a safe submariner? The underlying allegation, if I'm reading this correctly, is that somehow our navy is putting out submariners who are not safe. I find it hard to imagine that they would somehow risk a crew and a \$250-million vessel and put them in a compromised situation. It would be very difficult to imagine.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** The people who are making these decisions are not liars; they're not doing this on purpose. Some of them just don't understand the realities of submarine service. Remember, we live in a surface navy, and we just happen to own submarines. There are very few submariners, so many of the people

in these debates are surface people who do not have the experience. They are advised by experienced submariners, and there are some senior submarine officers who will disagree with me.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Admiral MacLean is a submariner.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes, he is. He was a submariner in the early 1980s.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Sir, you mentioned the yearly operating costs of the Victoria-class subs. Do you know what those are?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** No.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** One from the chairman at this point, straight to you, Mr. Kavanagh. Is it your view now, as you sit there, that the Canadian navy has sent submariners without proper training to sea, making them at risk, putting themselves and the rest of the crew potentially at risk?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** That is my personal view, yes.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Round two, five minutes per questioner, starting with Mr. Casson, please.

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Kavanagh, for being here today and for being so frank with us.

My first question has to do with the training for fighting fires as part of this contract. I asked a question, I think during the briefing at DND, about the methods of training for actual firefighting, the simulation that was used. I was told that there was real smoke, real heat, used in these simulations. Is that true?

● (0940)

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes, it is. Now, the crews that were in England got the firefighting training. For the ones in Canada, we do essentially a modified version of what the surface-ship guys do. The surface-ship guys have a compartment, and it's filled with flame and smoke. They have to go in and attack the fire, and put it out.

We do that in submarines. We go into a smoke-filled compartment—it's real flames—with portable first-aid firefighting equipment. We crack bulkhead doors and all that kind of thing, and we put the fire out. There are very unique issues within a pressure hull in terms of fighting a fire, and we are not trained there.

**Mr. Rick Casson:** How many of our submariners would have taken that training in England under those very real situations?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Every member of the crew that brought the submarines home, so anybody who went over for the full training package.

**Mr. Rick Casson:** On the issue you mentioned of not standing up a special project office for this project of procuring these subs, at what point would something like this happen? What magnitude of project does it have to be for a special project office to be struck?



**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Anytime there's a capital procurement, or even a large refit, a special project office is struck. If you are familiar with the 280-class destroyer frigates, or DDHs, they went through a modernization period called TRUMP. That ended up costing \$4 billion or something like that. They had an office of several hundred people doing only that. The helicopter project has several hundred people doing only that.

In this procurement, we bought it off the shelf, I guess you could say, but we had a Canadianization period. There was all sorts of work to do, and that was 20 people or thereabouts. So when the submarines came back, there was a project that was responsible to bring them back to Canada and put them through the Canadianization work period. It was a very lean project, and they did that, to the contract. But the submarines are not operational. There are all sorts of issues—personnel issues, training issues, new equipment types of issues.

A project office would have the funding and the resource to sort that out, but there is no project office in this particular case. There is something that we call a “program”. It has, oh, eight people or ten people in it, I think, and they're having to work within the existing matrix in the National Defence Headquarters.

As an example, if the submarine bought a new electronic warfare system, which it did, the support for that has to come out of an existing office—the electronic warfare office, let's just call it that. That office already has a number of other issues to deal with, such as surface-ship electronic warfare. When you're asking an office to cut into its existing funding for another thing to spend money on, there is some angst. It's like swimming upstream with no support. And that's happened. As soon as the first submarine got back and we started experiencing the problems because of this reality, everybody who has worked in this process, if they're honest, will tell you that using the matrix has been a failure. That's been part of the problem in terms of the delays in getting our act together.

**Mr. Rick Casson:** We were told of an offer of some funding from the U.S. to help go towards the purchase of these submarines, to work in conjunction with joint training. Are you aware of that scenario being presented? Have you personally ever taken part in joint operations with Americans in training?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes. A large part of my career was spent doing that.

I was aware of that offer. I don't have first-hand knowledge of it, but I read the papers and I remember people talking about it. I was not involved in the negotiation.

**Mr. Rick Casson:** How much interactivity do we have with the U. S. Navy as far as our submarines are concerned?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** We don't have any right now, obviously, but when we were driving O-boats, easily half of our time was spent off the American seaboard. We would go down and use their ranges to fire torpedoes every year, but we would also participate in American exercises. The reason we did that was that they were desperate for us. They had defined the primary threat for their navy as the littoral diesel-electric submarine. They were very concerned about “rogue nations” procuring these weapons, and they had to learn how to defend themselves. We were the perfect consort for

them in order to allow them time to establish tactics to defend themselves.

• (0945)

**Mr. Rick Casson:** Was it ever explained by the higher-ups who made some of these decisions how you were supposed to make these submarines operational and keep them in operation when the funding wasn't there for spare parts and maintenance?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Are you talking about the O-boats or the Victoria class?

**Mr. Rick Casson:** The Victoria class.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** That was part of the frustration. Again, we knew even at my level, which was a very tactical level on the submarines, that these decisions had been made, because if they had not been made, there would be no submarines. It was this deal or nothing. The responses we got as we tried to raise these issues were that it would be sorted out; there was no funding; we were just going to have to ride it out and fix it in the future.

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

Now I'll come to this side.

Mr. Rota please, five minutes.

**Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Kavanagh.

If I can take you back to the firefighting question, you've served on the Oberon. I'm just wondering about the difference in the training. You mentioned the misting, the flames, and what not. There was the training in the U.K. For the submariners here in Canada, could you just run me through a very quick synopsis of what happened with the Oberon and how it differs from the Victoria class—what is missing between the two, in your opinion, or what the differences are?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Certainly. Alongside firefighting, training has been an issue for years both in the Oberon and in the Victoria class.

What would happen in the O-boat days was we would do the refresher training much like the surface sailors, with some small variance for the submarine community. We would use the equipment that we used, but we had no submarine simulator to go in and put fires out. We would then start, during the work-up process, fast cruising, which is basically bringing the entire crew on board, shutting the hatches, staying alongside, pretending you're at sea, and we would take this machine—Misty, the smoke maker—with us and initiate fires.

Once we had done that, we would then proceed to sea and do pretty much the same thing. We had various scenarios that we would put them through—fires on different parts of the boats, that sort of thing.

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** This is within the Oberon?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes.

With the Victoria class, I don't think it's changed that much, except that the experience level of the crews is such that many will not have seen incidents at sea, if you will, whether they're system failures.... I don't think too many people have actually had to face a fire.

For instance, the two times I went through a fire at sea, it was put out within 10 or 15 seconds, because the experience levels were such that you just didn't think, you just reacted. If somebody piped a fire and you were near, you ran at it with a first aid extinguisher, and on your way by you would put the smoke curtains down. The rest of the people would be going to emergency stations. They would know exactly what to do.

In the Victoria class, that training level has not been reached. A large part of that is because of the at-sea time and the experience levels. So if there was a fire at sea, you might get somebody who knows exactly what to do, but you certainly won't get everybody knowing exactly what to do. That changes depending on where you're standing, because every submariner has to have a base level of experience and knowledge for immediate reaction.

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** What was the crossover from the Oberon to the Victoria? Was there a large carry-over, or was it a brand new staff? It sounds like there was some carry-over.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** There was. Again, as to firefighting, there are similarities in terms of how you fight fires from one class to another. I guess the biggest difference in the Victoria class is the firefighting doctrine to use water and foam, which we would never do in an O-boat. We didn't believe water was a safe way to fight a fire in a submarine, but that's the way these were built. It's an issue that has been debated over the last two years.

There is a mechanical assembly called a Christmas tree, which is a firefighting station on the first deck of these submarines. I won't say it's complicated to rig, but you really have to know what you're doing; it's screwing in hoses and breaking pipes and that kind of thing, and all that was new. There would have had to be training on that almost from scratch for the Victoria class.

• (0950)

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** I'm not sure if this is within your expertise or not; I'm going to ask it because it just came to mind. What is the standard on submarines? Is it the water and foam or is it...?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Well, in the Victoria class the doctrine is water and foam because that's what—

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** But I mean worldwide with different types of submarines. I don't expect you to know this; if you do, that's a bonus.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** And I don't.

I will say we were all surprised to see that it was water and foam when we went over to pick these boats up.

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** I notice you've had life-threatening situations when you were in submarines over the years, and again, I'm looking at the differences.

I'll just ask a short question. In 1958 we acquired the Oberons?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** In 1968.

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** Sorry. Now, in 1968 would we have had the same comments on the Oberons as we do on the Victorias today during the transition, and is there just a learning curve when you go

from one level to another? I would hope we would learn from what we've done in the past, but is that just normal when you're going from one platform to another?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes. Some of it is, absolutely, and I would have to say yes, we probably did have those issues in 1968. At that time, though, we had Canadian submariners who had spent years and years serving in British submarines, so we had a core crew, but the men and the personnel issues were probably very similar.

Submarines were going to sea in those days with 50% of their crew on board; it was a different paradigm. You got away with that sort of thing in those days. You would not get away with that if something happened and somebody went to court martial in the cold light of day today.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Perron, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Good morning, Mr. Chairman and good morning, sir. If you don't mind, Mr. Kavanagh, we shall only talk about the technical dimension. We have said enough about the human dimension; let us refer now to practical matters.

First of all, before we purchased them, Victoria-class subs were in operation in the UK. Do you have a list of technical or mechanical problems that might have plagued those subs between the time when they were built and the time when we bought them? Do you know if there were problems?

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** There were problems. It's probably fair to say that you would need to expect that, because it was a new class of submarine that had just been built, and whenever you build a new class as complicated as this one, you're going to run into problems and you have to get through them. Those problems should have been documented, and many of them were.

I know for sure some of them weren't, because that information had to be delivered to Canada, and a classic case of some that wasn't was the dent discovered in *Victoria* when she was alongside. The Brits will say they have no record of how that happened, but whatever it was that caused a dent like that was a truly violent event, and we cannot believe that—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron:** I'll stop you there. Are you telling me that we were not informed of those problems and that they were not documented? This is important. Have we been cheated by the UK or is it normal not to signal a major problem?

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Well, again, the *Victoria* had a dent in its pressure hull, and the size of this dent was something neither I nor any of us had ever seen before, so the Canadian navy went back to the British and asked when this dent had occurred. The answer they got back was that there was no record or knowledge of any event that would have caused a dent. And this was a dent in the pressure hull; this was significant.

It caused a depth restriction on the submarine for some time. I can't remember the price tag for fixing it, but I think it was half a million dollars. This is an example of a defect or something that happened to that submarine that was not documented. I have no proof the British hid this, but I still talk to many people in the submarine community, and they're convinced something happened and wasn't documented on purpose.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron:** Now, let us talk about construction. Under the National Building Code, there are many rules to follow to build a house, for instance. The Code describes the type of material that should be used, and so on. Is there such a code for the navy and particularly for subs?

• (0955)

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** There's no universal code that says every submarine has to meet this particular specification, but every class of submarine has this documentation and each one of their engineering systems has a stated design capability, and the construction of that system has to meet that design capability.

A perfect example of that would be these cables. Were these cables designed to be immersed in salt water? If they weren't, to me that's a design flaw, but the documentation would determine that and I haven't seen it. I don't know what the answer to that is, but hopefully the BOI will have addressed that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron:** When a sub is purchased, do we have qualified staff like engineers to do the maintenance? If it is the case, have those engineers received training in Europe and more precisely in the UK and are they highly qualified?

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** The way this particular program was set up was that the submarines were reactivated in British industry and they had the qualified people to work on those submarines, very experienced. They build submarines all the time there; they build nuclear submarines. So yes, they had appropriate qualifications to work on these submarines in England.

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron:** In the navy? I'm saying in the navy.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** *Je comprends.* The British had people in the navy who were qualified to oversee that work. We Canadians sent over engineers as well, people who were not familiar with that class but were qualified engineers, so they had the expertise to make sure the reactivation process was going on the way the documentation said it was supposed to go on.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron:** I was flabbergasted by your answer to a question from my friend Anthony. You said that you were using water and foam to extinguish a fire. I hope that you do not use sea water because salted water conducts electricity and it might cause a huge firework instead of extinguishing the flames.

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Then, sir, you understand my amazement when I saw that, because I agree with you completely.

I will say that the electrical boxes in that submarine are designed to be watertight; that's what the builders will say. But tragically, we know that water inside the pressure hull of a submarine, particularly one with the electrics this one has, cannot be good.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron:** I have a last comment. A sub is like a plane. When things go wrong, you do not have the time to call a meeting to decide what to do to fight the fire. You must act immediately.

[English]

**The Chair:** Merci, Monsieur Perron. Thank you.

Now Mr. Bagnell, please, for five minutes.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Thank you. Thank you for coming.

I just have a couple of questions to see if there's a demonstration of what a lack of training might have done. We did a tour of the sub in Halifax, as you know, and in the area below the conning tower, where there are a bunch of instruments—I think it's just down from where the captain's bedroom is—is there someone stationed in that part of the sub at all times?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Are you referring to the one-man control console on the left side of that compartment as you're facing the captain's cabin?

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Yes.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes, there are several people there. There's the guy who's driving the submarine for course and depth, and there's the on-watch engineer, who controls the water coming in and going out of the boat and the electrical systems. They're both there.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** I was looking at that and I'm asking some questions about the safety equipment in that area. Tell me what procedure would occur if there was a fire somewhere in that type of area. Which pieces of equipment were in that area and what would the people do?

• (1000)

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** This was nasty, because the fire was in the captain's cabin. They couldn't leave their post, and that control panel you're talking about is where you do things like shut down ventilation or put pressure to the tank that the water comes from to fight the fires. It's one of the positions where you control some of the electrical systems. But that's the nerve centre of the boat, if you will, so they couldn't abandon their position.

Again, this is where the experience comes in. If that happened and you had to abandon the position because otherwise you were going to get burned, there is an alternate location within the submarine where you can control things in kind of a secondary mode. The captain might have decided to surface and shut everything down—of course, in this case they were on the surface. So there are ways that you can continue, but it depends on the individual scenario. That's where all this experience comes in. You have to make those decisions like that.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** I notice there's a fire extinguisher in that area, in the bigger fire system, but are you saying primarily that the person could not leave steering the boat to go to put the fire out, one that's right close by?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** That's right. There would be somebody else who would do that, because there are several people in that space.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Do you have any examples of where this lack of sea training led to a problem that you're aware of, or where the lack of maintenance or extra parts you were talking about led to a problem?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Well, first of all, there is the training. Here's an example—that control panel that you talk about is all buttons. You flood water in and you pump water out, and that's a continuous process in a submarine as you're trying to establish neutral buoyancy. It affects the control characteristics of the boat—if you're heavy, you sink, and if you're light, you go up. It's a very important process that happens all the time.

In the O-boats an officer did that by manually ordering valves open and shut. In these boats sailors do it by pressing buttons, and they're supposed to catch the trim. *Windsor*, after coming back and going to sea in the local op areas, was out one night, and the person on that panel, instead of pumping water out, got his buttons mixed up and flooded water in. The boat proceeded to get heavier and heavier and heavier, and all the officers on watch were standing around the control panel—the captain was there—wondering what was going on, and nobody picked it up.

The tank that they were flooding water into eventually overflowed into a space that people don't go into very often. One of the sailors down on 2 Deck opened up the door to that space, and several thousand litres of water flooded into the accommodation space on 2 Deck, so they had a flood on their hands.

The boat then surfaced in emergency. There is a procedure to do that. You can imagine the adrenalin was pumping, and everybody's afraid. It was at night too. Of course everything bad happens at night in submarines, it seems, so it was absolute chaos. The boat used up all its high-pressure air to get to the surface. They were safe, but had anything else happened, they might have needed that air for other things.

In the end it was all sorted out. They understood what had happened. But that is a classic example of experience levels and how little things can go drastically wrong in a submarine if they're not picked up immediately.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** I have one last quick question. Could that not have been trained on the simulator? Are not those two buttons

existing on the simulator, and the resulting problem that would occur if he had pushed the wrong button on the simulator?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes, and perhaps that speaks to the difference between simulation and being at sea, when everything has to come together. First, he got the buttons mixed up. Second, he was also having to talk to other people on watch to coordinate various things. That would not have happened in the simulator.

That's a good example of why you need at-sea experience.

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

Mr. MacKenzie, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Thank you.

Mr. Kavanagh, two or three times earlier today you talked about a crisis in the navy when these were being purchased. Was that crisis in the navy one of leadership, or was it created by lack of financial support from the government?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** It was created by lack of financial support from the government. It wasn't just the navy, it was the Canadian Forces. We were getting more missions than there was resource. In terms of leadership, perhaps the leadership should have stood up and said that we couldn't do it instead of pretending that we could. But those questions are well beyond my personal experience.

•(1005)

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** We're looking at the acquisition of these submarines, and I guess these could be best termed as orphans; they're the only four in the world. Is that a typical military acquisition plan?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** To buy just four?

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Because they're the only four.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** No, it's not typical.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Are you sometimes better off to walk away?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Well, you have to put that into context. When we got those submarines there was a white paper and a defence review that said we needed submarines, and that was the only way we were going to get them.

I still believe we can make these submarines operationally effective, provided there's consistent funding and all those other things.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** The other aspect of what we're talking about is training, and I think my friend Mr. Rota was alluding to it. There were trained submariners on the old O-boats. How many of those are left to retrain now for the Victoria class?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I don't have first knowledge of that because I've been gone for two years, but I have spoken to several senior submarine officers, including commanding officers, in the last two weeks and they've given me comments like, "There's nobody left". What that means, I don't know, but it is an issue.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** So part of this issue is that you can retrain people who have already been trained if they're still in the service, but if they're not there....

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Sorry, I don't follow.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** You can retrain people who have already been trained in the O-boats, but if they've already gone, there is no retraining; you have to start from scratch, right?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** One of the issues in the late nineties that we were terrified of was that the decision would be so delayed that we would stop the O-boats and that capability would go away. These are all very perishable skills, and unless you keep them up, you don't just pick up the keys and go again. There's a tremendous effort and time required to bring that capability up, and that's what we're seeing.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** And the need to train more people resulted in the delay of the subs being brought back?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** No, it didn't. The navy just moved the goalposts and provided the dolphins they needed to. The delays were due to reactivation issues that were not considered, in terms of bringing the submarines back, and then the delays that have occurred since they've been back are due to the lack of ability of the navy to handle the maintenance, to procure the spare parts. That's been a huge one in terms of delay.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** We were going to bring four subs back and we've attempted to bring four back; three of them we did and we started the fourth one. Did we have the crews to man those four submarines, or are some of them the same people?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Very much so. Some of them are the same people, yes.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** You stated a number of times that the naval officials didn't understand the submarine. Did that contribute to what we're into today, perhaps, with the acquisition and the training?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I think it must. And please understand that I am a submariner, so it's not an objective opinion, but it's one shared by everyone wearing dolphins, that's for sure. Sometimes when you had to go and put an issue on a table and you thought it was black and white, the answer that came back would just blow you out of the water. It is because the people who are not in submarines sometimes don't understand the safety issues and that sort of thing.

I think if it has affected this project—and I believe it has—it is because they have underestimated the complexity and the difficulty of doing things they ordered to get done.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** On the shortage of spare parts, because these are the only four, now that we've purchased these submarines, how do we look to the future to have the parts we need when it's something not in production?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** It's possible, but it's expensive. You have to go to industry and tell them what you need; they retool and they make the parts. But that will cost money.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** And there are a limited number of parts, obviously, because we only have the four.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes.

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

I wouldn't mind a couple of questions. We've had quite a few.

Maybe you can help me, Mr. Kavanagh. Unless I misunderstood earlier, I thought I heard you say you were part of a group that

agreed that given the new simulators, etc., somewhere between 7 and 10 days of training at sea would be acceptable. Did I hear that correctly?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes. That was for O-boat training as we ramped up to meet the contractual requirements to send people over to train on the Victoria class, and that was 7 to 10 days for enlisted personnel and 21 days for officers.

•(1010)

**The Chair:** Right. So you weren't referring to that being adequate training for these particular Victoria-class subs?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** No, and I'm not sure what that number would be. I don't have first-hand knowledge or experience.

**The Chair:** Okay. That does clarify it for me. Thank you.

Have submariners, to your knowledge, refused to go to sea in these subs?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** There have been some cases of that. One of them was in front of you, I believe. Mr. O'Keefe, who was the first guy on scene at a flood in the motor room, basically refused to go to sea. I don't know if there have been any others recently, but there have been in the past.

**The Chair:** Is the rationale that the submarines are unsafe, or they were inadequately trained, or what?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I think Mr. O'Keefe believes they were unsafe. I don't believe those boats are unsafe. I believe if we don't fix things they will become unsafe.

**The Chair:** Your problem is with the training, which you feel is clearly inadequate.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes.

**The Chair:** This is the last question, because you're candid and I think articulate as well. Well, you're Irish, so we would expect that, right, Gordon?

Do you think these subs were a good buy for the Canadian navy or not?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** That's a very difficult question to answer. In very strict terms they were a good buy, but what is tragic about this is that they cost more than we were prepared to pay, and we knew that, and we haven't done anything about it. So now we're in this morass of problems.

Submarines are very expensive to procure and to get worked up to an operational level, but once they're there, they're a pretty good platform to do the things that you ask a navy to do. But again, this is another debate: do we need submarines? I could talk about that for hours. I believe we do, by the way.

**The Chair:** I appreciate your saying you think we do, but as you rightly noted earlier, past governments, both Conservative and Liberal, have made decisions in white papers that we do.

This committee is about to undertake a review of our defence policy. I don't know what this committee will say vis-à-vis submarines or anything else, but we sure want to get at it when we finally get a chance.

Now, there is still a bit of time and it's the turn of this side here. There would be one government speaker left and then one Conservative speaker left, and that would complete the second round. We still have a bit of time. I'm in your hands. I'm willing to give any other member a brief question.

Let's go over here then. It's his turn.

Mr. Martin.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Kavanagh, you mentioned the dolphin giveaway. I hope I'm reading this correctly. Are you suggesting the submariners were basically fast-tracked and simply given dolphins to get them on the boats, to bring the boats across from Great Britain to Canada?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** To show up, to do the conversion training, to bring the boats back, yes.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Does the training they're receiving now differ from the training those submariners received to get those boats across to Canada? Is there any difference, or is it the same training?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** There is a difference, because the UTT, or the British team, did the training in U.K. It involved classroom training, then simulator training, and then at-sea training. Because of the delays right now, we aren't getting anybody to sea. That's the big difference. Beyond that, I don't have any personal first-hand knowledge of how the training has developed since I retired, beyond what people are telling me.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** The training is on paper, so I'm wondering if there is any difference between the training on paper that existed for those submariners to bring that boat across versus the training that's on paper now to train a submariner today. There are standards, and as a professional submariner you know those are on paper. Is there any difference between those two kinds of training?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I don't have first-hand knowledge of that. I know paperwork has been developed since my retirement. I don't know what it says, but there is no at-sea training requirement.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** There's no at-sea training requirement in the current training requirements?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Correct. There is something called an OJPR, an on-the-job training performance, but there is nothing in there that says you have to go to sea to get that done.

• (1015)

**Hon. Keith Martin:** But it is a requirement in order to get your dolphins today?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I cannot swear there is anybody there now who has zero sea time. There have been some cases where people were awarded dolphins and no one can remember their being at sea.

For instance, if an OJPR says you have to change over the ventilation system, that's designed to be a practical learning event at sea in a submarine. But it doesn't say the submarine has to be at sea. So you could do that alongside and get it signed off, and potentially somebody would award you dolphins. I don't think that has happened very often, but again, on average, about five days' sea time is what they're getting, I'm told, and it's not enough. There's no documentation that says you have to be at sea to do these things.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** We're obviously trying to piece all of this together. Why would the chief of the navy, who's a submariner, accept something that was less adequate? As submariners have said to me, we wouldn't go into a boat that was unsafe, and we wouldn't go down in a sub if we felt our training was inadequate. A professional submariner and your colleagues—and you know them better than any of us do—would not go into a sub if they felt their training was inadequate.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** As I said, there are senior submariners who will not agree with me, and they will be outraged at my comments today. There are many more who completely agree with me. When I went public shortly after the fire—because at that point I thought maybe it was a training issue—I got emails and phone calls from all ranks saying thank you, thank you, thank you.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Sir, are these submariners active in our Canadian navy today?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes, absolutely.

In terms of Admiral MacLean, I don't know. I have never discussed this with Admiral MacLean. I've never had access to him. It is my impression that he's being told by some of these senior people that the simulators fix everything and it's the best training in the world.

The simulator training is as good as it's ever been; there's no question about that. But we are still lacking this experience, and that's my issue.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** I'll close here, sir, but the reason I ask is that I'm talking about submariners at the lower ranks. They said, "Dr. Martin, we have families, and we want to live. We wouldn't go down into a boat if we felt our training was inadequate or the ship was inadequate, because we have a responsibility to our families and to ourselves". I find it hard to believe they would accept the fact that they had inadequate training and go down into an environment that they felt was somehow going to compromise their lives.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** It's my opinion that many of them, being as inexperienced as they are, don't understand what can happen very quickly. I have 17 years in that community and I've seen lots of things at sea, and very simple, benign situations go south very quickly. I know what it takes to respond.

And it's not just me. Most of the senior submariners will agree with me. Again, let me stress, I don't think we've ever sent a submarine to sea in an unsafe condition. What I am concerned with is that because there is no structure for training and experience levels, if we're not careful we're going to push submariners to do operational jobs that they are not ready to do. We need to crawl, we need to walk, we need to run.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** This is a consideration for the future then, not now.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes, that's right, because we really haven't been to sea.

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

I have Mrs. Gallant to finish the second round, and then we'll have a few minutes for one brief question from a couple of members. Then we'll go to phase two of our meeting.

Mrs. Gallant, five minutes, please.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and through you, to the witness.

Part of what we're doing is trying to determine whether or not the purchase was a wise one. Earlier, you had made reference to the \$750-million envelope and were talking about the inability to acquire parts. Part of this contract...there seemed to be some change along the way. I haven't seen it yet, so I can't determine exactly what was in the contract, but there initially seemed to have been a barter arrangement.

Putting your comments into context.... We're trying to determine whether or not the barter was worth it, why they changed the method of purchase. Can you give us an idea at what point you knew that you couldn't purchase the parts together with the submarine?

• (1020)

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Immediately. We knew that given the funding envelope, whether it was bartering or whether it was a cheque—I have no first-hand knowledge of what was done—there was this magic number, and everything had to be done within that magic number. And that could not include the spare parts that were required.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** There were other things going on at that time, too.

You may not know the answer or have access to this information, but in the early 1990s Goose Bay was on the chopping block, and various NATO partners with budget constraints of their own were looking to pull out. Rather than shutting down Goose Bay, with the obvious political fallout that would follow, DND looked for creative ways of keeping Goose Bay open while at the same time trying to recapture the money that was being syphoned off from other means.

We want to know, were submarines the only piece of capital equipment being offered, that you're aware of, in this unique type of lend-lease-barter arrangement?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** As far as I'm aware, yes, but again, I have no first-hand knowledge of that.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Earlier we talked about the sea trials and the technical reports. It's possible that the technical reports are quite lengthy, and given that the chair has indicated we'll be looking at putting forth a report towards the end of February, we're somewhat limited in the time we would have to look at those sea trials. Would there be some part of that document that, once we are able to see it, we can home in on and look at?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Do you mean the board of inquiry?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** No, the sea trials that went on, the technical reports that would have been put together at that particular time. What should we be homing in on?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** I don't have any first-hand knowledge of that activity because I was sent back to Canada before *Victoria* went to sea for the sea trials.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Lastly, my colleague made reference to the training plans. Apparently there's a training plan related to the submarine capability. To the best of your knowledge, is there a

training plan related to the submarine capability specifically for the Victoria-class submarines?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Okay. Thank you.

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

Now we can have a couple more brief questions, and then we'll finish with Mr. Kavanagh. If any other member has another one.... I know Mr. Bachand does, and then I'll recognize Mrs. Hinton.

[Translation]

Mr. Bachand, keep it to one question only, please.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Kavanagh, I shall ask you a hypothetical question and I hope that you will answer it as sincerely and candidly as you did from the beginning. I appreciate the uniqueness of your contribution.

If you were today the Chief of the Defence Staff, would you ask Admiral MacLean to retire immediately?

[English]

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** No, I wouldn't. I don't attach personal blame to Admiral MacLean at all. He was busy with APOLLO. He honestly believes in his heart that submarines are essential for the navy. I think he was let down by his staff.

Frankly, in the last year and a half things have started to change within the navy—or so I'm told. There has been real muscle put behind fixing some of these submarine problems, and that was not the case before Admiral MacLean got there.

**The Chair:** A candid question and a candid answer. That's what we're here for. Thank you.

Mrs. Hinton, please.

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** My colleague Mr. Bachand just got you crossed off a lot of Christmas lists, so my question is going to be very simple.

How are personnel recruited to become submariners? What type of response is there?

By the way, since this is my only question, I want to tell you that I too have enjoyed the candid responses you have given today. It's been very helpful. Thank you.

• (1025)

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Thank you.

Submarine service is hard. There are harsh conditions of service. The brain box is used consistently, more so than on a service ship. There are not that many perks. It has traditionally been very difficult to keep submariners. In the early 1990s we went from a volunteer force to a press gang type of service, a non-volunteer force, because of the huge attrition rates.

I think the navy is now not finding it difficult to find people to come to submarines, but I understand it is still a huge issue in terms of keeping them, because when you're sent to a submarine you're required to serve for three years, and in accordance with the policy you should be allowed to go back to the surface navy.

**The Chair:** Members like to ask questions. I'll give Mrs. Hinton one more.

**Mrs. Betty Hinton:** If I interpreted you correctly, we used to force naval people to go onto submarines—they didn't really want to go there—but now we don't force them anymore. Some actually have a desire to go, but they're committed there for three years. If I'm reading what you said correctly, at the end of three years a lot of them choose not to go back to a submarine.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes, and we still force people to go to submarines.

**Mrs. Betty Hinton:** We do still force people to go on submarines?

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Yes. Obviously you want the volunteers first, but if you can't fulfill your requirements through the volunteer process, then you post people.

**The Chair:** Well, Mr. Kavanagh, thank you very much. You've been candid. You've been eloquent, I think. You have enlightened some of us for sure and all of us in some important areas. What can I say? We appreciate your candour and we thank you for sharing your time with us today.

**Mr. Peter T. Kavanagh:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** As Mr. Kavanagh leaves, I'll just have a look here. There are four items, and I'd like to change the order. For the first couple we're going to have to go in camera, but I think we can deal first with Mr. Rota's letter to the committee.

I don't think Mr. Rota's letter has been distributed. Mr. Rota is writing to me as chair of this standing committee in his capacity as chair of the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs. The subcommittee is writing to request authority from the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs to do a study on the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and various elements of the pay and benefits package.

That's the normal procedure. When a subcommittee wants to undertake a separate study, it has to get the blessing of the standing committee.

So I've put the request forward. Do you want to speak to it briefly, Mr. Rota?

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** Yes. It came up as a concern in our committee on Monday. We were looking at the benefits that concern veterans more than anyone else. This is tied into the superannuation benefits of the military, so it does cross over the lines into defence. In order to make it official and just be able to do it, we thought that rather than go off on a tangent and do it on our own, we would ask permission and get authorization to proceed. If it's okay, what we would do is proceed on that. It would benefit both committees, but we would be concentrating mainly on the veterans.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Questions? Mr. Blaikie.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** You say you're concentrating mainly on veterans, but in what sense? Everybody who's eventually going to be receiving a pension is a veteran. Is that the sense in which you mean...?

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** We're looking at the benefits that are being paid out now.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** It's not just to veterans of the Second World War?

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** No, when I say "veterans", I'm talking about people who are retired and are receiving a military pension.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** I'm just curious. Are you going to look at the issue of trying to develop some kind of pension component for reservists? Would that be on the...?

• (1030)

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** In all honesty, Mr. Blaikie, we've just opened the talks. We haven't set full parameters yet, but it's certainly something we can consider.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** That is something that has been on the table, if you like, so I would encourage you to make sure that at some point you consider that.

**Mr. Anthony Rota:** I appreciate the input. That's very important. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. O'Connor, do you have a question?

**Mr. Gordon O'Connor:** It's just on a couple of examples of the sort of thing we haven't defined yet. For instance, many retired military people come to many of us and complain about what they call the gold digger clause. If somebody past 60 years of age marries for either the first time or the second time, their spouse is not entitled to a pension. Another one is that when the service member dies, the surviving spouse gets 50%. There are certain rules; these were set back in the mists of time, and there are a whole bunch of them. We want to know, are these still valid today, etc.? There are probably others.

**The Chair:** I don't see any problem with the request. Does any member have an objection to the request? I think there is unanimous consent, Mr. Rota, that your subcommittee go ahead and do some good work on that area.

Thank you.

Documents have been distributed. We can deal with those later on.

There's been a request to appear before this standing committee by the Federal Government Dockyard Trades and Labour Council East. I think we met with some of these people or talked with some of them when we were in Halifax.

Any comments? Mr. Blaikie.

**Hon. Bill Blaikie:** In light of some of the testimony we heard today about the maintenance and other problems that may have contributed to the situation we're looking at, I think it would be quite useful to hear their side of the story on this. They're the ones who are actually doing the work—or are not able to do the work because of cutbacks or whatever—so it makes sense to me.

**The Chair:** Are there other thoughts, other comments? Mr. O'Connor.

**Mr. Gordon O'Connor:** I think there might be benefit in listening to the union. They may have a perspective since they work on these boats. They may have perspectives we haven't heard before. So far we've had the official versions all the time. The official versions may be reality, but it also might be beneficial for us to hear some things that aren't official versions.



**The Chair:** Fair enough.

Any others? Mr. Martin.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** If this has relevance and is to ensure the safety of our submariners, by all means we should listen to them.

**The Chair:** Are there any other comments?

I'm quite content to hear them, but we were all there on the ground in Halifax and it was pretty well publicized we were going there. I would have preferred that they ask for the meeting right on site. But

they didn't, so I'm in your hands. I think I'd better get a motion, though.

Mr. Blaikie moves, seconded by Mrs. Hinton, that we do invite these labour council representatives to appear.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** The clerk will contact them right away and schedule them.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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