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## **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, February 28, 2008**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Shawn Murphy**

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Thursday, February 28, 2008

• (1255)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.)):** I'd like to call the meeting to order. For the record, this is the meeting of Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I understand you have a motion that you want to present to the committee, Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** That's correct, Chair.

The motion is as follows: as the Auditor General's report noted that 75% of soldiers who had reported mental health problems or disorders did not receive sufficient help, and as Brigadier-General Jaeger, in her testimony, noted that 27% of returning soldiers from Afghanistan have mental health issues ranging from substance abuse, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, that the public accounts committee call upon the Auditor General to do an audit of the military health care provided returning soldiers from operations in Afghanistan, with a special emphasis on the 27% screened to have mental health issues.

**The Chair:** Everyone has heard the motion. Is everyone—

**Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Did we have 48 hours' notice of this?

**The Chair:** No, we're going to deal with that right now, Mr. Williams.

As everyone in the committee is aware, before this can go any further, Mr. Wrzesnewskyj needs unanimous consent. Does Mr. Wrzesnewskyj have unanimous consent to move this motion immediately?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay, the motion is taken on notice, and it will be dealt with at the appropriate time.

**Mr. John Williams:** It should be circulated in two languages first, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** And be circulated in two languages.

Mr. Poilievre.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** I have a motion that I think might garner unanimous consent. If not, I will table it for 48 hours' notice as well.

I've spoken to some of the folks who brought out the information that led to our study on the RCMP. They are concerned about

whether personnel changes are going to be made in that organization in the aftermath of our study and the Brown report.

I am hoping to get the committee's consent that we call the RCMP commissioner in as soon as we get back in the fall to discuss the personnel changes that have followed in the wake of our report and the Brown report. I'm raising this so that he be given notice that we are hoping to scrutinize this response before the committee, that we are giving an indication right now that this is something we are watching carefully, and that we hope to have a very clear update on it when the House resumes after the summer.

I'll leave that with you. First, I need unanimous consent for it to go forward. That's the first step. Secondly, it would be interesting to hear what colleagues think of the idea.

**The Chair:** Mr. Poilievre, it doesn't seem to be an emergency. You are looking for a meeting in the fall. Could I make a recommendation that you put your motion in writing, in both official languages, and we'll deal with it on Tuesday or Thursday?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Yes.

I would reiterate that the reason I'm raising this is that I think we should, as a committee, write the commissioner in the near future to indicate our intention to have him provide us with an early fall update on the matter. But you're absolutely right that there's nothing urgent about this; there's no reason we couldn't discuss it at the next meeting.

**The Chair:** We'll take that motion on notice.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** I think procedurally we're at the point where the member is seeking unanimous consent, and I would like to ask a question prior to that vote.

My question would be both to the mover and to you, Mr. Chair. If I'm understanding it correctly, you're talking about staff changes that have taken place and that there are concerns being raised. Those concerns deserve to be looked at. My only concern is whether we are the right body. For instance, if we already had the civilian oversight board in place, that would be the right place to go. I don't necessarily know what that is right now, but I have some concern strictly from a jurisdictional point of view.

As we know the mantra, we are a committee of accountability, not management. We dealt with an Auditor General's report ad nauseam, and we stretched our mandate as far as we could. I'm not sure that any human resources issues that might ensue from that are our responsibility; it gets us one step away. That's my concern. It's not that it should not be looked at, but whether we are the right body. My gut is telling me no.

**The Chair:** You are getting into the debate on the motion.

Do you want me to seek unanimous consent, Mr. Poilievre?

• (1300)

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Sure.

**The Chair:** Does Mr. Poilievre have unanimous consent to present his motion now?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Chair:** It's on notice, and it will be tabled and dealt with at the appropriate time.

Is there anything further?

**Mr. David Christopherson:** You will rule at that time, Chair, whether it's in order?

**The Chair:** If it's an issue, yes.

Is there anything further to bring before the meeting?

**Mr. John Williams:** Mr. Chairman, I appreciate Mr. Poilievre's concern to ensure that these things happen, but we not only are an institution of management, we deal in public. There is certainly no place for looking at personnel files and these types of things in public. Therefore, I would ask that we seriously think about—

**The Chair:** There is a point of order.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** On point of order, Chair, I'm happy to have this debate, but if we're not going to have it now, then let's not have it.

**The Chair:** We're not going to have it now, you're quite right.

This meeting is adjourned.

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