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## Standing Committee on National Defence

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EVIDENCE

**Thursday, November 26, 2009**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable Maxime Bernier**



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• (0905)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC)):** Good morning everyone and welcome before the Standing Committee on National Defence.

[English]

This is meeting 41. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we will do a study on recruitment and retention strategy.

It's our pleasure to have with us three witnesses. First, we have

[Translation]

Major-General Semianiw, Chief of Military Personnel.

Thank you for being here.

[English]

We have Commodore Daniel MacKeigan, Commander, Canadian Forces Recruitment Group.

Thank you for being with us.

[Translation]

We also have Karol Wenek, Director General, Military Personnel.

Thank you for being with us.

Gentlemen, you will have 5 to 8 minutes to make your statements, after which the members of the committee will want to ask you some questions.

**Major-General W. Semianiw (Chief of Military Personnel, Department of National Defence):** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to provide an update on recruiting and retention in the Canadian Forces.

[English]

As you're aware, people are the backbone of the Canadian Forces. They are the key to achieving the Canada First defence strategy objectives, including our force expansion goals. As I think you will see, we've devoted significant effort to understanding the linkages between recruiting, attrition, and retention, and making sure that we get them right. Indeed, as you are aware, in my role as the chief of military personnel, the functional authority for all personnel matters and issues for the Canadian Forces, caring for the ill, the injured, and their families, is my top priority. My number two and three priorities, which I have stated publicly on many occasions, are recruiting from Canada's best and retaining the best that the Canadian Forces has.

Before I begin, let me introduce some key members of my team who will be assisting me here today.

[Translation]

I have with me today Commodore Daniel MacKeigan, Commander of the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group. He is the officer principally charged with attracting and enrolling Canadians from across the country. I also have Mr. Karol Wenek, Director General, Military Personnel. He is responsible for identifying not only how many personnel we need to recruit and in which occupations, but he is also responsible for the other end of the spectrum: monitoring attrition and retention within the CF and developing the strategies to ensure we retain Canada's best.

[English]

Finally, in addition to my opening comments today, I'll be providing some exhibits that will provide clarifying information on our challenges and successes, and would ask members of the committee that you can take a look at them after my opening remarks. They will assist you in posing questions and I think in having an informed discussion on these two very important issues.

The story today in terms of both recruiting and retention is a positive one. This success, however, needs to be understood in the context of our personnel history dating back to the 1990s. As you are aware, significant force reductions during that period resulted in the Canadian Forces' total strength dipping to approximately 55,000 by 1999. Not only that, but these reductions had resulted in a skewed demographic profile, not only in general experience levels across the Canadian Forces but also across a number of our military occupations.

[Translation]

When the CFDS, therefore, provided us with the stable funding necessary to grow the CF to 68,000 by financial year 2010-2011, we were presented with unique recruiting challenges. In that context, it is important to note that the CF cannot buy experience per se; we need to develop uniquely military skills throughout a career. In addition, the unique nature of military employment can mean that there is a two- to seven-year lag effect between the time recruits are enrolled until they are trained and fully employable.

[English]

In effect, then, not only were we required to compete with other potential employers in a booming economy, but we needed to adopt recruiting strategies that could ensure that we obtained the right number of personnel overall, and equally important, that they be in the right occupations. This is an issue we will come back to in the question period. It's not just about recruiting 60,000, 70,000, 80,000, or recruiting 7,000; it's having the right recruits in the right jobs with the right skills.

[Translation]

That is the challenge. There may be difficulties but, to my mind, that is the challenge.

[English]

How are we doing? The answer, in short, is pretty good.

I removed the “darn” here, because it's not in my vocabulary: we're doing pretty good.

To date this year we've enrolled 5,494 recruits, or 74% of our annual overall target, or strategic intake plan, of 7,440. Indeed, total enrolments to the end of October are 8% higher than they were at the same time last year. Of 101 military occupations, 32 have already achieved their recruiting targets.

How did we achieve this success? It would be easy to say that the economic downturn was key to this success, and indeed, we believe it played an important role. However, long before the economic downturn, and beginning with Operation Connection, which was a program, an operation, to better connect the military with Canadians, we purposely built and implemented recruiting and attraction strategies that resulted in significantly more potential recruits considering the Canadian Forces as a career choice.

These included implementing proactive outreach programs; identifying and focusing on hard-to-recruit or stressed occupations; streamlining processing and improving customer service; optimizing new technologies, such as e-recruiting; and mounting focused marketing and attraction campaigns.

I'll just come back to one point. We use the words “stressed occupations”. You'll hear us use it quite a bit. They are those occupations we have a hard time recruiting. You'll see that we've identified clearly what those are, as Commodore Dan MacKeigan will speak to later.

● (0910)

[Translation]

We have developed programs aimed at those occupations.

While we have had significant success in recruiting, there is no doubt that we also have our challenges. As you are aware, the Canadian Forces must continue to compete in a highly competitive environment, especially as our ideal demographic pool, the 17- to 24-year old cohort, continues to shrink as a percentage of the overall Canadian population. In addition, while we have made great strides in improving results for some traditionally hard-to-recruit occupations, some remain a challenge.

That said, our recruiting system has proven highly adaptive and we are now shaping up strategies to target these occupations; our recent successes in moving the yardsticks with some of the naval occupations is a case in point. Indeed, we have recruited more naval personnel to this point than we did all of last year.

[English]

At the other end of the spectrum from recruiting are attrition and retention. Indeed, as I alluded to earlier, they are part of a complex, interconnected, closed-loop system of human resource activities. I'll give an example here, moving away from my introduction. If you were to say to me today, “General, stop recruiting”, you would not see the effect for probably another six, seven, or eight months. It's an area where you can't just push a button and see the effect tomorrow. As Karol will tell you, it takes time, given what we have in place.

The fact is that we need some attrition to ensure growth. I'll repeat that: we need some attrition to ensure growth. Attrition is not a bad thing. We need it to ensure an appropriate demographic profile and to ensure that experience and continuity are maintained whilst, frankly, allowing new blood to enter the organization. We need to have attrition.

The key is to predict, monitor, and manage attrition to achieve these objectives. As I alluded to earlier, the demographic profile of the Canadian Forces following the reductions of the 1990s made this activity especially complex, as there's an experience trough that needs to be carefully managed.

As in recruiting, we have put significant effort into attrition and retention activities and we are meeting with significant success. Last September, for example, our attrition rate reached approximately 9.2%, a rate that was clearly having a negative impact on Canadian Forces growth. As of this month, the attrition rate is now at 7.9%. Even more importantly, the voluntary attrition rate has declined nearly two percentage points to 5.1%.

The impact of this reduced attrition rate cannot be understated. It clearly reduces the stresses on both our recruiting and our training systems. Equally important, it allows the Canadian Forces to optimize the precious skill sets of highly experienced personnel during a period of significant forces growth, recapitalization, and operations.

I'll move away from my notes here. If you have people who leave the forces at the rank of colonel, it's not a one-for-one exchange. It doesn't just mean that I have to recruit one person at the beginning; I probably have to recruit two or three. Karol will elaborate on that. Again, this comes back to the importance of having a retention strategy in place that actually keeps people in the Canadian Forces for the right reasons.

What we are now doing is developing and indeed implementing, where immediately possible, a Canadian Forces-wide retention strategy, which was issued this past summer. Thus, we have implemented a number of initiatives at our recruit school to reduce training attrition, ranging from enhancing military fitness programs and testing to minimizing the initial shock of military life on young recruits, many of whom are away from home for the first time.

Without in any way compromising our standards, we have adopted a philosophy of “train to retain”. At the other end of the spectrum, we are encouraging longer-term personnel to stay by addressing those issues perceived as dissatisfiers in service life, such as personal recognition, terms of service, work-life balance, and many others.

What does this mean for the Canadian Forces? In short, the Canadian Forces is on schedule, indeed ahead of schedule, to achieve our fiscal year 2011-12 growth target of 68,000 regular force personnel. In fact, I am already at 67,350, and that is now a problem for me, because if I'm asked why I don't just keep recruiting folks, the answer is very simply that we also need a training system that has the capacity to meet all the additional recruits, and we are building that training system over time.

● (0915)

[Translation]

Are things perfect? No. We realize, of course, that we still have challenges ahead of us. These include addressing the shortages in some technical occupations, the stressed trades.

However, targeted recruiting activities appear to be even moving the yardsticks in these traditionally difficult occupations. The larger challenge we likely be to ensure that we maintain the right balance between recruiting, growth and attrition over the next few years, optimizing our recruiting and training systems.

[English]

In closing, let me say that our efforts in recruiting and managing attrition represent a success story. While we acknowledge that we have our work cut out for us, we are nonetheless well down the path to achieving the forces growth required by the Canada First defence strategy. While there is no doubt that the economy has played a role, this success derives equally from a lot of hard work, not only from my team, but also from the navy, the army, and the air force.

Again, I'd like to thank the members of this committee for addressing this very important matter and for your strong support for the members and families of the Canadian Forces. Both Commodore MacKeigan and Mr. Wenek, who are my experts in both of these areas, and I, if needed, are pleased to answer any questions you might have.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** Major-General, thanks for that presentation.

I will give the floor to Mr. Wilfert.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll share my time with Ms. Neville.

Thank you, General. Thank you, gentlemen, for coming.

I'm glad to hear your story, and obviously the issue particularly on retention is absolutely critical.

On the senior level management area, can you elaborate...? There have been concerns about retention at that level. How we are addressing that?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** You will see in my introductory comments, which I did include to ensure that I stayed within my eight-minute time limit, because I know timings are very important here in this committee, that there are two areas when you take a look at the challenge.

Challenges were during years zero to three, which I touched on. To elaborate, what we've done in the recruit school to take our attrition rate at the recruit school from perhaps 24% down to maybe 15%, positive...but the flip side is this whole area of the 19 to 24 age group. That's the second issue.

The point to note is that with the younger age—speaking on behalf of my children—everything is transactional. It's not relational. Even though I tell my children I love them every day, it's still very transactional at that age.

At the other end, 19 to 24 years, it is very relational, as Karol will tell you. It's not about benefits. It's not about money. It's all about how people are treated, being part of the organization.

Given the transformation, given everything we've done, given the Canadian Forces have grown, that has been an area that's come up as a spike. Karol will be more than happy to address what we've done in those areas. I'll give you one of them.

One of the dissatisfiers was this, and Karol will jump in here if I have it wrong. We have certain gateways at which you leave the Canadian Forces.

*Monsieur le président,* I think we have almost two hours, so if I can, I'll take a little bit more time to answer the questions.

At any rate, you hit that 20-year gateway, and the next gateway would be about year 27. Those are the pension gateways we had. And if you said you would stay, but then you decided to leave, you would be penalized when it came to your pension.

What we put into place, actually before we issued the retention strategy, again, if you remember part of its process, was a small tool that allowed people to stay in, not be penalized, if they wanted, for a shorter period of time.

● (0920)

**Mr. Karol Wenek (Director General, Military Personnel, Department of National Defence):** Correct.

Mr. President, I think there are really three factors that we need to look at in terms of explaining and dealing with senior-level attrition and retention. One is the structural issue that the general has referred to.

Back in the 1970s, when the terms of service structure for the Canadian Forces was designed and implemented, they put in place a provision that at certain gates people had the option of leaving voluntarily or the Canadian Forces had the option of directing release if they felt there were surplus numbers there or if they wanted to retain a more robust population in the Canadian Forces.

So one of the gates that was put in place at that time was the 20-year service point, and there was also a special provision made in the Canadian Forces pension act that would allow for the collection of a pension based on 20 years of service at that point.

About eight years or so ago, when we started looking at the demographics of the Canadian Forces population, we said that's not going to serve us in the long run. So we introduced a change to that provision at that time. The Canadian Forces Superannuation Act changed to require 25 years of service prior to being eligible to collect a pension.

But we also realized that for those people who were currently serving on the 20-year-of-service term, it wasn't really going to have much effect on them. We said it's going to take about a generation for that cohort to clear, but then everyone serving from that point forward would be obliged to serve to at least 25 years before they could collect a pension.

For that group that was in the 20-year-of-service term, we penalized early attrition after 20 years of service. We actually put a little bit of incentive in and said every additional year you serve beyond 20 years will count towards your pension. So if you serve 22 years and decide to leave, then you get a 44% pension.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** That ensured that we actually kept some of that experience for a couple of years.

**Mr. Karol Wenek:** Exactly.

The other issue that I think we need to look at, which makes senior-level management loss a concern, is that the demographic profile of the Canadian Forces is far from ideal. In fact it is bimodal, if you want to put it that way. We have a very large cohort of young people, we have a very large cohort of long-service people, and we have a very small cohort of mid-career folks—and that is the future leadership of the Canadian Forces.

So we have to try to keep them—just about everybody—because the depth there is just not that great. At the same time, we need to bridge that period by keeping the long-service people, who are the experienced, more senior people, as long as possible. This is something you can't fix once you've made the mistake. That mistake was made back in the 1990s during the downsizing period, when we did not have a controlled release program or downsizing program that would have preserved the profile. But that horse is long out of the barn, and again, we have to wait for time to cure the situation.

The third issue that I think bears on the loss of senior people has to do with current conditions of service. As you all understand, we're a long way away from the time when we had single-income families. Dual-income families have been the norm for approximately 20 to 30 years. Military families as well must deal with that requirement.

One of the issues that undercuts the ability of military families to preserve their income stream is the mobility requirements of the Canadian Forces. We have a huge geography and we have bases scattered all over the country. In this respect, we're very comparable to Australia. We have about the same size of military force, and the same magnitude of geography, and they have to move people frequently as well.

That is disruptive to the income stream for families, and it's disruptive to children's schooling. At about the age of 40 or so, when they're at about 20 years of service and have kids in school, high school, or university and a spouse or partner who may be well-established in a job, the proposition of moving them 1,000 kilometres away forces decisions for them.

What we were trying to do to redress that issue as part of the retention strategy was to see whether we could develop regional career profiles that would allow people to remain for at least most of their careers in the same region. It will be a challenge. It's more achievable for the navy, which has east coast and west coast home ports, and some of them go to NDHQ at later stages of their career. It will be more of a challenge for the army, the air force, and the support occupations.

Those are really the three issues: the structural issue, the demographic one, and the conditions of service.

● (0925)

**MGen W. Semianiw:** I move 15,000 people a year, of whom half are actually part of the program. We can get into that later in the questions.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** I appreciate that you're addressing that and I thank you for that information.

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

Now I will give the floor to Monsieur Paillé.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also want to thank our guests.

I want to put several questions to you, starting with recruiting. I will admit that there is something I do not understand. You need a new cohort of soldiers for the Canadian Forces but, as you probably know, there is some resistance in Quebec to recruiting in cegeps and even in high schools.

You said that you seem to be on track in relation to your objectives and that you have even already surpassed some of them. I would like to know if you intend to review that policy in order to limit your recruitment in education institutions. As far as I am concerned, that is completely inconsistent with your stated objective.

**Commodore Daniel MacKeigan (Commander, Canadian Forces Recruiting Group, Department of National Defence):** Thank you.

I am quite aware of the situation with the unions, which we were able to observe in the streets. I do not do any recruitment in high schools because those students are too young. In cegeps, we only provide information.

[*English*]

I only run programs to give information; they're information sessions.

As I said before, I send the same message as the guidance counsellors, and that's why we're frequently invited to schools. I tell my recruiters—they're employed as recruiters, but they're not “recruiting” in the schools—to say: “Don't drop math and physics. Keep your options open.”

The guidance counsellors really like my young adults to come to schools and give this message.

[Translation]

Only six cegeps have refused to meet with my recruiters. There is nothing new there.

[English]

For a long time they have not invited us, and we don't go where we're not invited.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** It's a really good question, Mr. Chair.

Let me elaborate.

[Translation]

I find that a bit confusing.

[English]

If it's a challenge in Quebec, why is recruiting up in Quebec between 8% and 10%? I'm not sending people out into the street to pull people into the recruiting centres; they're walking in on their own.

It's an issue I've thought about quite a bit, given that my family comes from Quebec, and somehow something doesn't connect. Perhaps it's generational. But recruiting in Quebec in particular, I'll be as bold as saying that it's perhaps almost 15% higher than it used to be.

Again, it's not just the young. You need to be aware, ladies and gentlemen of this committee, that we have recruits at the recruit school who are 51 years old. As I told you last time, I'd be more than happy to recruit any of you into the Canadian Forces. We have recruits who are 51, so you can't say anymore that it's just young people. That's the way it used to be, but people of any age are coming into the recruiting centres, particularly in Quebec.

[Translation]

It is incredible. If it is a challenge, it is very difficult to explain.

• (0930)

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé:** Thank you for your explanation. However, my position is as follows: I have no problem with you recruiting young people but I have problems with you recruiting in the education institutions of Quebec.

I have been told that some members of the reserve would be laid off. Naturally, I will not reveal my sources, Mr. Chair. According to my information, there will be some rotation and some temporary layoffs, of about 30 days, between January 1 and April 1, 2010. Can you give us some details about that?

[English]

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Yes. You're obviously talking about

[Translation]

people who belong to class B, reservists who work nearly full time. There are class B people in each commandment of the Canadian Forces.

[English]

What I'll tell you is that with regard to your comment or your question, under my command it's not the case. Under my command, there is not a temporary layoff of class Bs.

To be fair, I'm not current, so I can't give you details. I'm not the commander; I don't run the Canadian Forces. So it's a question you may want to pose to the vice-chief, who I believe is coming next week.

[Translation]

We will deal with the situation of class B staff.

[English]

What I can tell you is that under my organization of about 17,000, there are no temporary layoffs of class B.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé:** You said that you are looking at the balance between work life and military life, as well as supporting families. You probably know that in Quebec city, in my riding, there is talk of building a new armoury in the area of Sainte-Foy. However, the decision has been made without military families being consulted.

You may not be personally aware of this matter. I understand that my question is very specific but I would like to know if, under your policy, you intend to look at the requests of military families before taking any steps to build this future armoury.

[English]

**MGen W. Semianiw:** I don't know the direct answer to the question, because I do not know what's happening with building the new armoury. That I don't know.

*Mais par contre*, we have surveys. I've brought with me my director general of military personnel research and analysis, Madam Susan Truscott. We put surveys out to the families.

[Translation]

We ask questions.

[English]

You know, "What is military life like?" or "What do you think about this?"

It comes back to issues that Karol Wenek addressed about mobility. We need to move ahead with defining a modern mobility policy for the Canadian Forces that sees greater geographical stability for families; that is the issue.

But I don't know the answer to your particular question. You'd probably have to ask the commander of the army.

If I can elaborate, I think it's important that as you move ahead on this issue, members of the committee, you remember that the make-up of the Canadian family has changed dramatically. I'm sure you all know that. It's not just two parents. In many cases, it's one parent, maybe more than one parent, maybe more than two. This also brings with it challenge in what we do here.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Mr. Harris has the floor.

[English]

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all for coming this morning. It's a complex topic, as you've outlined.

I'm sure you have surveys of your own, as the chief recruiter, Commander MacKeigan, and I'm sure you are aware of some of the public domain information. I saw a survey or reports of a survey several months ago. I don't have it with me, unfortunately, but it said that the majority of people who join the Canadian Forces aren't necessarily the gung-ho "I want to go there and fight the enemy or get involved", but are doing it for career reasons.

First, would you agree with that?

And second, what happens in this period of zero to three years that you do get...? Well, you've improved it, but it's 25% attrition. Are young people who join disappointed with the options they're presented with? Give us a little scenario.

Suppose I decide I want to join the forces because I have a good, positive feel about the forces and I think it's the place for me, but I'd like to have a career. I don't really know what I can do. You have 101 occupations.

Do you actually say, "Okay, Mr. Harris, come in: we'll give you a test to see what your interests are and we'll try to provide a career path or training program for you"?

• (0935)

**MGen W. Semianiw:** What I'll do, Mr. Chair, is give a quick answer to the first question, then turn it over to Commodore MacKeigan. We'll come back to the second one.

Having been intimately involved with what happens at recruit school, I'll answer your question as if Mr. Jack Harris were a recruit. I'll go through with you what would happen.

Just quickly, remember, people join the Canadian Forces probably for seven different reasons. You are right, some of it is career, some of it is security, some of it is because my parents were in the military, some of it is for the country and many other reasons. There are a lot of reasons why people actually join. The other one I'll have Commodore MacKeigan elaborate on.

Remember, if we enrol 7,000, it doesn't mean 7,000 will walk through the front door. It probably means closer to 25,000 to 30,000 will walk through the front door, of which we pick 7,000.

There was a newspaper article that I read, I think in the *Citizen* or the *Post*, that was incorrect. I was going to phone the reporter, but I kind of let it lie. It said the Canadian Forces had not met its targets. We had 30,000 people walk through the front door. We only picked those 7,000 or whatever, knowing that we maybe missed that target by 20 or 30 people.

If I'd wanted to get the target, I would have phoned him and said, "Push the button, bring more people in", but that's not what we do. I want to make sure we have the right people in there, so it's only a point I would add.

I'll turn it over to Dan, who will elaborate on the recruiting piece.

**Cmdre Daniel MacKeigan:** Mr. Chair, when an interested person comes into a recruiting centre, they see a standard customer service desk, like they'd see in any properly run establishment. We ask them

why they're there, we thank them for coming in, and we invite them to sit down.

Most people have an idea of what they want to do. Fortunately or unfortunately, it's based on war movies, books, video games, or, best of all, from the advertisements you see on television, the fight campaign—in that case a better idea. They will generally come in and say, "I want to be in the air force", "I want to be in the army"—in fact, a lot say they want to be in the army—or, "I want to be in the navy".

Then we sit you down to evaluate what are your strengths, your aptitude. You do a very rigorous test, and out of that comes your suitability for things you could do, based on what you've done to date. Then we question if you are interested in any of those. If you say, "Yes, I am, but do you have any other choices?", we may say, "Yes, you're in luck, these are open". Then we carry on the process of medical, etc., ultimately leading to an offer and enrolment.

My military career counsellors are quite good at the subjective and objective portions of trying to figure out the best fit for a person. I'll be frank: they're a mix of guidance counsellor and used car salesman. If someone comes in and says they'd like to be in the army and want to do a particular thing, they will be asked if they have thought about an alternative. It's something I want and they want: it's like a dance of the dialectic. We bring them to a point where both groups are happy.

We don't lie to anyone or not say what the trades are about.

**Mr. Jack Harris:** I have two other questions, just quickly. I don't if you'll have time to answer them, but—

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Do you want me to answer the second one?

**Mr. Jack Harris:** Go ahead, yes.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** On the second one, we looked into this issue of what is going on between year zero and year three, particularly at the recruit school.

What happens is you walk into a recruiting centre...and remember, it is my team that actually approves the recruiting advertising. It comes from Dan himself, put together by public affairs. It ensures that we're connected.

What you'll see is...and in fact some of you are looking at it right now. We are evolving the recruiting campaign to move into the difficult-to-recruit stressed trades, so the two are connected.

So perhaps you saw that on TV. But remember, 40% of our folks today are being recruited online. It has nothing to do with actually seeing somebody face to face, which I could come back to here later on. It's a very fascinating topic. We have a virtual recruiting centre in North Bay that actually chats with people throughout the day throughout the country, then talks to them on the phone. Forty per cent of all the forms are filled in online. They walk into a recruiting centre, and then they do a very quick interview. So things are changing.



But you do that, and then you'll be told to report to Saint-Jean. We are victims of our own success. What we said was that we wanted to streamline and speed up the process of getting young men and women, and folks of any age, into Saint-Jean. We have a cohort there that we got in after 25 days. What we heard from many of them was, "Whoa, this a little bit too fast for me. I didn't think I'd be here that quickly."

So the first issue, *Monsieur le président*, was an issue of culture shock. We spoke to many of the young folks, and folks leaving, and asked why they were leaving. It was about too much of a shock having left where they've come from.

Personally, I believe the social fabric is changing, of society. I see it with my kids, who want to kind of stay at home until they are 30.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Hopefully my kids don't read the transcript here today.

But that's not just an anomaly. We are starting to see that more and more. When we ask what the issue is, we're told, "I'm really homesick. I really wish I could talk to Mom and Dad."

The other issue was perhaps—we admit this—up front being a little bit too hard. What's led to the drop is that now when you arrive at the recruit school, you are met by the entire leadership team. You're not met in the middle of the night. You're met at the beginning of the day by the leadership team. They sit you down and they introduce themselves.

We have actually taken a very different approach, a very relational approach—I know people laugh when I say it publicly—where we start off by saying, "Hey, we love you, and we're really happy that you made this choice, and we want to train to retain you. We are not here to screen you out. We want to screen you in."

So that starts off from the beginning. We have changed some of the processes. And what I did personally—the buck stops with me—I changed the day that you could leave the recruit school. Up until last April you could leave day one. So if the issue was an issue of culture shock, what he did find out was if you keep people to week five, in all likelihood many will stay. We took the theory and put it into play. Guess what? It worked.

So what we have found is the different way that we work and deal with the recruits, train to retain, in a number of different ways. If you get into the details I am sure you can understand what you've seen in movies and the like. I've kept them to week five. The attrition rate has dropped, over that cultural piece that they're really homesick.

The second thing we've done is we're now connecting with moms and dads to ensure that when you phone home to your parents and you say "they kicked me out of here", when the truth really is that you left on your own accord, your parents know exactly what's going on.

We've put a program in place where you connect with your parents. We actually put it on the website. You can take a look at it. We are in the process of sending them packages, so they are more informed. We've realized the nature of that family unit has changed and everyone is involved in that decision.

But I have to tell you what's great. I'm passionate about this—I'm sure you can tell. On graduation day we have changed the program, where every week we start with a new platoon. We graduate the platoon. Those parents come and are so very proud of their kids, and so are the kids.

It's not just kids, actually; it's all ages.

● (0940)

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** It's good business for Saint-Jean, too.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** It's great business for Saint-Jean,

[*Translation*]

especially for the Corporation du Fort Saint-Jean.

[*English*]

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**MGen W. Semianiw:** In the end, it has worked with a different style and approach. We're keeping you around a little bit longer now.

If people do want to leave, and they're adamant, we'll let them go. We'll let them go. But the number has dropped dramatically by changing our approach, putting in some policies.

The other thing we have done is our new fitness program. We no longer do fitness testing in the recruiting centres. We took that out. The buck stops with me; I made that call about a year and a half ago. Now when you arrive at the recruit school, in the first week you take your fitness test. If you pass it, you carry on with your training. If you do not, we keep you around and make you fit. You get a personal trainer.

Now, there's structure here. You don't get to sleep in all day. We wake you up in the morning, we give you a personal trainer, and your swipe card allows you to eat only good food in the cafeteria. We put you in bed for an hour in the afternoon.

Remember, the objective here is to retain. We get people fit. Originally what I had put in place was to keep people around for 90 days. They're doing it in 30 days.

Last year, by making that little shift in approach, we added to the CF's overall expansion targets by 550 folks, just with that little fitness program. If we hadn't had that program in place last year, those 550 would have left.

We've only had one person—I'll answer the question now, because I know you're going to raise it—join the Canadian Forces in order to join the fitness program. He left at the end.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**MGen W. Semianiw:** But he was the only one.

I've gone down and visited three times now. I've gone quite a bit to Saint-Jean. I've visited and talked to those in that fitness company. There's a company structure to it. They come out of there, after 30 days, fit. Then they carry on with their training. And guess what? It works.

So we're doing a number of things to screen you in, not screen you out.

• (0945)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** As I'm sure you're aware, committee members, we could talk for hours on this stuff. But I know we don't have hours, so I apologize.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Major-General.

I will give the floor to Mr. Hawn.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank you all for coming.

It's very impressive what's happening today. I just go back to my own experience; we generally termed the recruiting and the training system as "chopper Charlie". You can interpret that any way you want.

I have a few specific questions, and I may bounce around a little bit.

In exhibit D you show the goals for women, aboriginals, and visible minorities. Without getting into huge detail, how do you generally arrive at those goals?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** I'll turn it over to Karol, who is driving that piece.

**Mr. Karol Wenek:** Mr. Chairman, the general model for determining representation goals in the federal public service and other areas of the economy that are federally regulated are determined by the labour department and the work availability estimates they have for those populations.

However, given that the military is not homogeneous in terms of its jobs—there's a wide variety of jobs, and they would like us to think in those terms—we have explained to them that joining the military is not like taking a job in corporation X or corporation Y. There's a whole lifestyle change that comes with it. Therefore, we've asked them to consider adjusting those workforce availability estimates on the basis of general interest in the population to join the military in the first place.

As a result of the work we do that...through third party survey organizations, they determined the baseline level of interest in military service. From that, we adjust the availability estimates to what's reasonable.

To give you an example, the workforce availability estimate for women is about 50% according to the labour department, but the proportion of women who are interested in joining the military for any period of time is much lower than that. That's why our goal for women is 19.5%.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** On the other hand, remember, everything is open. It's very different from other militaries. Everything is open, including combat.

I was in Israel about a month and a half ago, looking at the ill and injured program they have in place. They have a very different approach. Every nation, based on its social views, has a different approach on how you employ everybody.

Ours is, as I'm sure you're aware, all open. We have a diversified force in Afghanistan.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** General Semianiw, with respect to immigrants, other countries, the U.S. and France specifically, offer incentives for immigrants to join and serve and it counts as extra time towards achieving citizenship. Have we looked at that specifically? Are we open to looking at something like that?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** I'll give you a quick answer and I'll let Karol give you the details.

We've looked at it all. When it comes to bonuses and incentives, our sense is that it will have little effect on the 19- to 24-year-old age group because it's not about money. Compensation benefits in the Canadian Forces are very good today. They are not the best, but they are very good. That's where it needs to be.

At the other end we already have some incentives in place. If you are a doctor and you want to come in, we will provide you with a financial incentive.

Again, I come back to not having a challenge in bringing folks in to the Canadian Forces; therefore, why would I need incentives?

**Mr. Karol Wenek:** There are two groups that I haven't mentioned already. With the aboriginal population, for example, where our goal is 2.8%, we have cultural orientation programs where they can try out the military. We have the Bold Eagle program that originated in Saskatchewan; it's western-based. There is Raven on the west coast. We have a new program at Borden. Then we have a separate aboriginal entry program that has the intention of bringing people into the forces. The others are cultural familiarization courses. They have the option of walking away at the end, but they do build leadership skills and so on.

With respect to visible minority populations, we have struggled with that. We have outreach programs and contacts with leaders from those communities to try to encourage service in the military but we have not been as successful.

Some of our serving visible minority members have the opinion that some of these groups are looking at higher-status occupations. Depending on where they come from, for many the military does not constitute a high-status occupation or line of work. It's our job to convince them it is a worthwhile and honourable career.

• (0950)

**MGen W. Semianiw:** On the pay side, when you talk about benefits I don't think we want to be a place where it's all about money. I know in other countries it has become that. As Commodore MacKeigan will tell you, many of the recruits understand that very early on. The pay is actually very, very good. After five years in a specialist trade, you are making very good money.

I think not giving people everything right up front does a number of things. They have to wait for it. I remember that I had to live off orange crates and all that in my house. I'm not saying that's where it is today—that's the struggle I have with my children. But at the end of the day I think that financially it's pretty good in the forces. We don't need to go to benefits at this point in time.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** As long as the pay is not a dissatisfier.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Agreed. It is not a dissatisfier.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** On what I'll call the Afghanistan factor—I have no idea whether we have looked at that—I've talked to a number of soldiers who said the reason they're joining is because of Afghanistan, and when they leave Afghanistan they're getting out.

How much of a factor is that?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Ah; great question. We got the data for that yesterday: it's not true.

Karol, you can jump in here on what we've found.

**Mr. Karol Wenek:** Based on very preliminary research, because some cohorts have only been back in what I would call non-operational duty for a short period of time, there's no difference in the attrition rates between those who have served in Afghanistan and those who haven't when those samples are matched on a variety of characteristics.

That said, the operation is ongoing. Potentially still an attractor for some people.

Here's an odd statistic for you. You can make of it what you will. We were looking at some of the strengths in various army occupations. I understand the chief of land staff raised this as an issue at SCONSAD earlier this spring, that he was having difficulties in some occupations. As you know, if you look at the casualty lists for Afghanistan, the hardest-hit occupations have been combat engineers and infantrymen. Yet the manning level for those occupations is over 100%, with hundreds of people in the training pipeline waiting to come in. You explain it.

I would speculate that there is some interest in the adventure that represents. Certainly our American colleagues have expressed similar concerns, that once they down tools, if you like, operationally for a sustained period of time, they may have more difficulty attracting some people into the forces.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** The figure you want to kind of hold onto—my folks and I have looked at this, and we always provide this advice—is the number of rotations.

After your third rotation is when you really start thinking about whether you should stay or whether you should go. All the way up to the third rotation in anything, be it Afghanistan or the Congo, operationally, it is still part of the challenge of why you joined. After the third, it becomes a very different understanding or construct. That is why the commander of the army has in place a policy to ensure that people don't...

You'll see those who have gone on four or five. In many cases, they want to. If they want to, they'll go. But after three or four, it's your choice, and the army will step forward and support you.

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

We'll give the floor to Ms. Neville.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Thank you very much for coming here. You clearly have a well-thought-out, comprehensive plan.

I want to follow up a little bit on Mr. Hawn's question in terms of diversity in the military. I think you touched on it, but I'd like to know a little bit more about what kind of outreach you're doing, particularly to get women, aboriginal populations, and visible minority populations expanded a bit.

I'm also interested in knowing whether you have looked at the assessment tools you use at the beginning, when you're recruiting, for cultural or gender bias. Could you talk a little bit about that?

• (0955)

**MGen W. Semianiw:** I'll let Commodore MacKeigan start off by telling you what they're doing on diversity on the west coast, in particular, to give you some hard examples.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Is it different across the country?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** It is different across the country. This is the first thing I think we have to understand. You can't take a cookie-cutter approach with the country and try to say that every province is the same in social makeup. So it is a slightly different approach, agreed?

I'll turn it over to Commodore MacKeigan to tell you what's happening on the west coast, on the diversity side, and then I'll turn over to Karol to tell you a little bit about the programs we have at the other end. He'll talk about what you're going to hear and see when you walk into a recruiting centre, whether you're aboriginal or not.

**Cmdre Daniel MacKeigan:** In a nutshell, people like to join the armed forces if they see people who look like them doing interesting things in uniform. So if I want to recruit from any group, I want to have young adults out in front of them who look like them. That doesn't necessarily mean visible minorities. It is in all sorts of ways. In my communities in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, I place great emphasis on representing the diversity of those local communities in my recruiting centres, and that encourages people to join. That's the first thing.

I have women commanding officers in my recruiting centres. As for gender bias, we scrub through all those tests we do and make sure there are no biases, as best we can, as you would in any modern organization. Most of them have to do with cognitive ability and whatnot.

For recruiting among aboriginal and first nations—you know, Dene, Gwitch'in, and what have you—the most important factor is personal and permanent presence and engagement. They see the same people month after month, year after year, who are saying the same thing. They are making promises and keeping their promises. That's the single greatest determinant in attracting aboriginal and first nations people into the armed forces, so that's where I place my emphasis.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Before you move on, do you have any information on the participation of women, aboriginal, and visible minorities throughout the organization? How many are at senior levels? How many are at entry levels?

**Mr. Karol Wenek:** Mr. Chair, I don't have that information on hand, but we do maintain a database that tracks people. It's kept separately from the main human resource management information system database simply because that information is personal. People self-identify as belonging to these groups. We can't compel them.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** I know that.

**Mr. Karol Wenek:** So we keep that database confidential and separate, but we do track them to see how they are progressing, because as part of our periodic systems reviews that we are required to perform under the Employment Equity Act, we look to see if certain groups are disadvantaged in any way. I don't have the statistics on hand, but it's something we could obtain for you.

Now, to go your earlier question in terms of some of the programs we have in place, I mentioned the aboriginal entry programs as one set of activities. We also have an aboriginal leaders forum. Part of the strategy in terms of influencing people from the designated groups under the act is to make contact with opinion leaders. That really means community leaders within the respective communities.

So the aboriginal leaders forum consists of tribal chiefs from first nations, Innu, Métis, and also elders from those communities. We meet with them on a quarterly basis and have various staff representing recruiting, career management, and personnel policy to address issues they bring to us. We solicit their support in getting the message out to them that there are opportunities for their young people in the Canadian Forces.

We have similar kinds of programs with visible minority groups, but not to the same extent. In general, however, I think our best tool, if I can put it that way, is to show the diverse face of the Canadian Forces to the Canadian population. So you'll see in all the publicity materials that those members who are representatives of those groups and who are proud of being members of the forces are our best representatives and our best spokespersons.

We put a lot of emphasis on that, and we've also made sure that our internal policies accommodate things like cultural differences, religious practices, and dress requirements. We try to make them as welcome as possible without compromising any operational capabilities.

• (1000)

**MGen W. Semianiw:** To get back to your question—it's a great question—here's what we did at RMC. Last year we opened up a program called the ALOY program. That allows 25 aboriginal youths to come into RMC, not to be at RMC to do university but to get prepped for university if they need additional training.

So recognizing the fact that there might be a culture shock, that some might need some additional education and training, we began that last year. It was a huge success. We have aboriginal leaders in Kingston at RMC to assist us throughout the process. Now we're seeing that some of them want to stay on at RMC to get a university degree, because they now have that baseline to move ahead into university.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** I know my time is up, but I'll ask one quick question: are you tracking the retention rate of these groups?

**Mr. Karol Wenek:** Yes, we are, and they're no different from the rates in the rest of the Canadian Forces. I think that's an indicator of our success.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Thank you.

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

Thank you, Ms. Neville.

Now we'll give the floor to Mrs. Gallant.

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

First of all, I wish to thank General Semianiw for providing the opportunity to see first-hand how our joint personnel support units are functioning. Just to follow through and ensure that everything I heard that day was as good as it sounded, on Remembrance Day I had the opportunity to speak to some of our soldiers who had been very gravely wounded and were missing more than one limb. They confirmed that upon arrival in Ottawa, a support worker from the JPSU was there to help them from the outset. Their goal is not only to get better, but they also expect to be deployable. Thanks to our wonderful care, that may be a possibility.

I'd like to talk about one thing we saw that day.

Often there are positions that cannot be filled by military personnel; for example, there are some clerk positions that are filled by civilian employees instead. I want to give you a brief account of why I want to know the answer to this question. I'm looking for the number of positions that have been replaced with civilian employees over the last five years. In Ontario the situation for the army is that the civilian population of employees seems to have grown quickly, whereas in reality some of this growth may be from the substitution of civilian employees for military employees.

What we're seeing at the Petawawa base, for example, is that because you want to keep the number of new hires flat, the tradespeople who are civilian employees are being let go, and that really has an impact on the welfare of our troops. You know that infrastructure predating World War II costs a whole lot for repair emergencies and preventative maintenance, and it costs more to hire a contractor than a regular employee.

Do you know the answer to that?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** We don't have the answer to that question here, but we'll get it for you. The issue of Petawawa is probably a question you need to pose to the commander of the army, but we can give you the Canadian Forces' overall view.

If I could elaborate, the view within the department is that Canadian Forces is first of all a defence team. It's not just about men and women in uniform; it's also all about public servants and non-public employees who actually make up the defence team. In many cases the question of what is best suited for what particular job has to be asked.

I need to come back to one of the comments you made up front. Remember, as Canadians, you expect men and women in uniform to be deployable and to be employable when they're deployed. Clearly it doesn't matter what job you have in the Canadian Forces; Canadians should expect me, Commodore MacKeigan, and, in the past, Karol to be able to go anywhere the Government of Canada asks us to go. This becomes part of that challenge.

Clearly we'll come to you with the details to answer your questions specifically, but it is a defence team made up of regular reserve, full-time and part-time, and civilian personnel.

• (1005)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** The next subject has to do with something we touched on last time. It pertains to retention, more or less. It's the ability of the families to access health care.

You described a project in Trenton. We had done something similar in Petawawa, but we just can't get the doctors to stay. There was really good collaborative effort between the town of Petawawa and the military, but due to the shortage of doctors... Ontario rations its doctors by limiting the number of residencies.

My question to you is this: does the Calian group that provides doctors to the military require the doctors to be licensed in one of the provinces?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** The short answer is, yes, they do. Actually, they ensure that those licences are maintained throughout, and they do have to be licensed.

The challenge of finding not only a doctor but a dentist for military families is an issue we're looking at right now. There is a lot of focus and a lot of work being done on looking at our family program in six areas. The first is what happens when men and women in uniform go away and leave their families at home. The second is child care. Child care is the number one issue for men and women in uniform and their families. We are looking at what we're doing in that area. Third is the issue of health care and finding a doctor; then there is spousal employment, and finally housing. We're looking at that right now.

I'd be more than happy to come back, probably next April or May, to tell you the results of that work, but it is a problem, you're right; it's a challenge.

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

We'll give the floor to Monsieur Bachand.

[Translation]

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

I want to welcome the general and the admiral. I know that an admiral should never be called a general. I have been told it is not recommended. I congratulate you for what you are doing. You are really trying to make sure that things operate smoothly.

First, General, if you get more information about new developments on the armoury issue raised by Mr. Paillé, would you be kind enough to send it to us? It is very important for us. As for the 30-day layoffs, we understand that we will be able to question the vice-chief of defence staff when he appears before us.

I have the bad habit of looking at documents in both official languages. Sometimes, I am extremely surprised. However, this is the first time that I am really struck by the figures in official documents. Let me compare the French and English versions of Exhibit H. I know that Quebecers are distinct but I did not expect to see distinct figures in the French and English versions of the documents. The figures in the French version are completely different than those in the English version. I do not understand. For example, for sonar operators, I see that the proportion of offers is 38% in French but 84% in English. Most of the figures in those documents are different in the two versions. Can you explain that? There must be a mistake.

If I may, General, I will ask my two other questions immediately before letting you answer. As far as double-dipping is concerned, we have seen some reports in newspapers. It is very costly for taxpayers. I suppose it is also very costly for the department as far as its budget is concerned. Some high-ranking individuals leave the Forces and are then re-hired the next day. In some cases, they can easily double their compensation. I would like to know what is the departmental policy on double-dipping.

Finally, I would like to have more information about your recruitment policy. I know that this is not your area of expertise and that it may be more the purview of the general responsible for cadets. I know that the Brits strongly hope that young people involved in their Cadet Program will eventually join the armed forces, whereas the Canadian policy is not the same. It is more a kind of social group, even though it is significant. I meet with them regularly.

Is anyone in the Department looking at changing the Cadet policy in order to try and get some of them interested in a career in the armed forces?

• (1010)

**Mgén W. Semianiw:** First, I apologize about the figures, I am responsible. I know that there is a difference between the two versions but we will send you the right figures.

[English]

It's my fault. That rests with me. I apologize, and I will ensure the right ones actually get back to you.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** You don't know yet if the English or the French one is—

**MGen W. Semianiw:** I will get back to you on which one is correct and which one isn't.

Second, to come back to *les cadets*, that falls under the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff.

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Double-dipping?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** No, *le program avec les cadets* falls under the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff. You'll want to pose him the questions.

I could answer questions about the program, but that would only be my view. He actually runs the program.

[Translation]

He is responsible for the Cadet Program.

[English]

You referenced double-dipping. I'll give you a long answer to a short question.

First, does it happen? Yes. Second, I think we have to put this all into a broader perspective. It's just not for senior people; it's actually for wherever there is a position across the Canadian Forces that we're having a difficulty in bringing folks in. We have the *caporal chef* involved in the same issue. What came out in the press was the senior folks, but it actually happens at almost every rank level throughout the Canadian Forces in some way.

What it speaks to—just to make sure we have the context—is someone who leaves the Canadian Forces, draws a pension...

I would just make the point here that drawing a pension is a right. I cannot turn to anyone and say they're not entitled to draw their pension. It is a right.

So they draw their pension, and then a job opportunity comes up that actually goes out on the street. It's important that I speak to that. The job opportunity is a very open, transparent process. If I need to have a driver, I will send out, for any reservist, a job opportunity letter saying I'm looking for a driver, *caporal chef*, master corporal, sergeant or corporal, and someone will come forward.

In the end, what I can tell you in that context is that I have no idea, until we interview them, if that person has already come from the Canadian Forces or is a part-time reservist. In the end, if you look at the process to hire people, it's very open and transparent. What it speaks to, and we talked about it, is that there has been an experience gap between the age group of 19 and 24 years in the last three, four or five years with people leaving.

In many cases, those have been filled. Most of them are at the senior level by senior people who have come back.

On the one hand, the question would be: So what do you do? Do you not bring someone back who's already been in the forces, to bring back the knowledge for a short period of time? This is the other piece that didn't come out. The contract is a three-year contract, it's not another 20 years. *C'est seulement pour trois ans*. After three years the contract ends, or after one year, and then the job offer has to go out, if it's needed. That's the context.

We are looking at all of this from a class B perspective—you have already heard it, the question was posed—as perhaps reducing some of the class B job offers or opportunities. We're looking at the entire program and actually, perhaps, bringing it down.

As we move ahead, here's the issue. As I always remind people, how many years does it take to get 20 years of experience? It takes 20 years.

When I have everyone who leaves between 19 and 24, even though I can recruit 7,000 a year, I'm not going to see those folks for another 15 or 16 years. This is why I now have a knowledge gap and is why we went out with the letters to bring people in. That's what you saw. It was this thing we call double-dipping.

I want to remind members of the committee, Mr. Chair, that it is no different on the public service side. You can still leave the

military with a pension and get a job as a public servant, particularly if you're an injured person who has been wounded. You have priority in hiring. It's not a phenomenon to just the military. It happens across the public service.

It's the same with contractors. I can't tell you if any of the contractors used to be in the Canadian Forces or not. Many have. In essence, you would say they're also double-dipping. It comes back to one issue, which is, who has the job knowledge and the experience to meet the need for the short term, 19 to 24? It's starting to come down. We'll see that here in the next while.

But it does happen. That is the policy. It has been a policy. It is actually driven out of Treasury Board. There are very clear regulations—three years and there has to be a break every year. I won't get into the details, but it has allowed us in the end to meet that job gap that we're missing.

• (1015)

**The Chair:** Thank you, sir.

[Translation]

**Mgén W. Semianiw:** Once again, I apologize for the figures. I made the mistake.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I will give the floor to Mr. Hawn.

I know that you share your time with Mr. Payne.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** I only have a quick point to make. Then I'll turn it over to Mr. Payne, if he's next.

**The Chair:** That's fine.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Just to drive that last point home—I don't need a long answer—these are the people who are double-dipping who have earned their pension and met their obligations to the Canadian Forces. The Canadian Forces still has a personnel hole to fill and money in the budget. It occurs across all ranks and it is not an extra budget burden on the CF.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Check—plus you need to add a couple of pieces, too, in that the process is open and transparent. I don't go and hire this person or that person. It actually gets posted for 30 days.

We can't find folks any more. Reservists are being used across the country to a great degree. That has to be added, I would say.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Yes. Good.

Thank you much.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Payne.

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** I appreciate you being here, General, Commodore, and Mr. Wenek. I certainly have a lot of appreciation for our military, and admiration as well. My son is a reservist.

There is a question around reservists. You talked about class B and regular forces. Could you briefly give us a description of how a part-time reservist can become a class B or even move into regular forces?

[Translation]

**Mgén W. Semianiw:** It is quite simple, Mr. Chair.

[English]

We have three different categories of reservist: class A, class B, and class C. Class B is what we all talk about as the part-time reservist. They show up twice a week, they work in their—

**A voice:** Class A.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Yes, class A; sorry.

So the class As show up once or twice a week and they work in their local armouries, as probably your son does, and actually receive some money and are ready to go, if called out. Right now the focus is more on the Canada First defence strategy.

At the same time, if the Canadian Forces is short for whatever reason, operational deployments and the like, of personnel across its system, it can then go out and ask reservists in Canada if they'd like to step up and actually work full time. But here's the other point we need to remember on the whole class Bs double-dipping. They only get paid 85% of what a regular force person gets paid. It still can be a lot of money, but it's only 85%.

I have many class B staff who work in my organization getting paid 85% of what a regular force person would get paid—for good reasons. They're not deployed. I can't send them here or send them there in the current construct. They actually help us fill a hole for a three-year period. Contracts were one-year in many cases, so it was year to year, but they go for three years.

The last is the class C. If we need you for operational reasons, we then put you in class C. You get everything that a regular force individual would get. It's not just about money. Health care is provided, and there's a benefits program during that term of service.

What we did put in place for injured reservists—because reservists in many cases go class C, class A, and class C, class B—is that if people come off operations and they are injured, *s'il y a des blessés, on les laisse dans la classe C* until their wounds are healed and they're stabilized. So once they come back from Afghanistan, for example, we keep them in the forces as long as it takes for them to get the health care they actually require.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Thank you for that.

My son has actually just moved into a class B position with Sally Horse.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Are you charging him rent now?

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** No. Actually, he lives on his own, fortunately.

The other thing I wanted to mention briefly is that I had the privilege of being a parliamentary member at Canadian Maple Defender in Wainwright this past summer. It was a very excellent opportunity to live in with the military, the reservists in particular. While I was there, Bold Eagle was happening. It was graduation.

I have to tell the committee that it was extremely impressive, with the elders, the parents, the families who came and were so proud of their individuals who had taken part in that program. We did have an opportunity to talk to a number of the military and certainly a lot of

them have an interest in moving into the regular forces. I just thought I would also mention that.

The other thing you talked about was in terms of graduation. From the moment the individual signs up, how long is it from recruitment to graduation?

• (1020)

**Mr. Karol Wenek:** Mr. Chair, it depends really on the occupation in which the individual is enrolled, but basic recruit training is standard. It's 13 weeks for a private and I think about 11 or 12 weeks for an officer candidate.

After that, there are a number of factors that determine how long it takes to get qualified. First is the length of occupational training. Normally it's about six months or so, but in some occupations, highly technical ones, the training can last as much as a year or more. In certain officer occupations, for example, to become fully qualified as a maritime surface officer, it will take several years. Essentially you have to be capable of running the ship on the watch.

The other factor that determines how long it takes to complete training is training capacity and scheduling. To give you an example, at present the air force has a small shortage in its pilot occupation, trained pilots—about 300 or so, 250 approximately. But there are over 500 pilot trainees in the training pipeline. We can't just push them through any faster. There's a training capacity constraint there.

So it is variable, but in many cases people are fully qualified about a year after they've joined, usually, or a year and a half after they've joined.

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** I understand my time is up, but I do have a bunch of more questions around that.

Thank you.

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

We'll have to give the floor to Mr. Wilfert.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Well, you don't have to, but I'd appreciate it.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I was going to ask about training capacity, and you talked about improving it over time. But something that I'm particularly interested in is investment in personnel. No organization lasts very long unless it invests in its personnel. I'm in the same business as you are. I have to retain my personnel, hopefully. And one of the ways to do that, obviously, is about providing challenges, opportunities.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, could you elaborate, gentlemen, on the approach you take in terms of ensuring that people reach their capacity insofar as the challenges they seek? Sometimes they may seek challenges that are not realistic. But how do you do that? And how much of the outside—from the business world or from other institutions—do you draw on to look at the techniques they use in terms of applying that to the forces?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Thank you.

First, on the investment piece, I agree totally. But if you take a look at investment in personnel, the Canadian Forces is probably at the top of the list when it comes to what we do for folks, if investment means training and education, compensation benefits and the like, and providing challenging opportunities in work.

For us, the three of us and my entire team—we have about 17,000 folks—this is our mantra: the right person at the right place at the right time with the right qualifications. That's the mantra. The key is how do you achieve that?

What we have in place is a career management system. I have about 250 career managers, as they're called, who actually work for one of the generals who reports to me. They are responsible, if I were to use you as a case, for knowing exactly where you are, what you're doing, what your opportunities are, and what you want to know.

From your perspective, we just put a new tool in place that allows you, online, to tell the career managers what you would like to do, what's going on in your life. You can actually e-mail online—in the past it was all done by phone—and say, “Here's what I'd like to see.”

On the flip side, we now are starting to show online all the job opportunities across the Canadian Forces. Perhaps you want to move next summer or the year after. You can see what's coming open and you can e-mail your career manager and say, “Here's what I'm interested in.”

The career managers make contact with our folks at least once a year to say, “How is it going? I know you want to leave Parliament. We have a great opportunity for you somewhere else.” And it's a two-way street. You have to tell us what you want, geographically and challenge-wise, and then, depending on what's available, try to match those two together.

The career management system, interestingly, just finished its boards. We then take all that and wrap them up into boards. We hold boards every year for meriting, where we determine, at every rank level, how people have fared. And that's what we use for promotion in any one given year. That's how we ensure that the best continue to be career-developed. And at the same time, we contact folks. Not everyone wants to be a Canadian Forces chief warrant officer or the Chief of the Defence Staff. Many folks are happy with where they're at, with what they're doing, but they want to be challenged, either through employment or through education and training.

On the civilian side, I sit as part of the HR executives council. I meet my counterparts—TD Bank, Home Depot, for example, Sears, the Bay—and we talk about best practices, what's happening, to try to incorporate what we're doing. But I would submit, *Monsieur le président*, that in many cases they're looking at us, at what we do, particularly in succession planning, providing opportunities.

But I would come back to what I said. We're right at the top of the list when it comes to education and training. If you use me as an example, I've been away being educated and trained for five years, not all in a row, but for five years. That's difficult to find anywhere in the public sector or even in the private sector. So we do a great job at that.

●(1025)

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** I really appreciate that. That's most enlightening, and it's obviously helpful in terms of your retention strategy.

Commodore, on the issue of training capacity over time, can you elaborate on that? There was a comment made about this.

**Cmdre Daniel MacKeigan:** Yes.

The gold standard I'd like to get to is to recruit and enrol someone and have them go directly to basic training, get a little bit of leave, and then go right on their trades training in order to minimize the gap between when they show an interest to join the Canadian Forces in a particular trade and when they actually start doing it. We're working toward that. With many things we try to get there.

That's what we do to minimize the waiting time and to minimize their time when they're not doing what they saw in a picture.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. Boughen, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me welcome you gentlemen to our meeting. It's good of you to come and share your expertise.

General, just to alleviate one of your concerns earlier when you talked about your children still being at home, my wife asked me one day when our children were in their twenties if I thought the kids would ever leave home. I said, “Well, you're the maid and I'm the butler. Why would they leave?”

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Ray Boughen:** But eventually they do leave. Mine are both married now and have families of their own.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** Well, that's good to hear.

**Mr. Ray Boughen:** General, could you share with the committee your take on how civilian and military operations may co-exist? I'm thinking of 15 Wing in Moose Jaw, where there's a training program for pilots. Part of it is military and part of it is civilian. It looks as if it's doing very well. Pilots are being trained. There doesn't seem to be any confusion as to who does what.

Would you comment on that, sir?

**MGen W. Semianiw:** *Monsieur le président*, you probably have to get the commander of the air force to come back to address the issue specifically, but what we have done in the last number of years is move towards partnerships with private companies through an open and transparent decision-making process about who those companies would be. In the end, it's a great partnership you're talking about, very different from where we were 20 to 30 years ago.

This one I can talk about in a little detail. Where we now find more civilians working with us together, on operations around the world, it works out extremely well. Some would have said it's a challenge, but I can throw out to you this small anecdotal story.



Last year we decided last year to do five pilots. We'd go to certain community colleges across the country and do five pilots for training. It comes back to the question asked by one of the members of the committee about training capacity. What if you don't have enough training schools to train everybody you recruited?

So we went to five colleges, told them we'd like to do a pilot, and asked if they could do that. This is now the military with the private folks. We actually put our recruits in there, with leadership, in the colleges. The presidents of the colleges are extremely happy—that the dress standard is raised at all the colleges, that their people are much better behaved.

Strangely, and probably understandably, it has had a good effect on both sides of the fence. The military better understand the civilian side and vice versa. They actually do come to better work very strongly as a defence team.

**Mr. Ray Boughen:** Good.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Braid.

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here this morning and for the strong leadership you're demonstrating in continuously improving these metrics. It's very impressive.

I have some questions flowing out of the slide deck, and I'd like to start with exhibit H, the priority occupations. I'm looking at the English deck, at two red alert areas: the land communications information systems technician and then the pharmacy officers.

I'm just curious to know what challenges there are with recruiting for those two roles and what strategies you have in place to deal with those challenges.

• (1030)

**Cmdre Daniel MacKeigan:** Mr. Chair, once again, that's a good question. Those are red for a reason.

I'll start with pharmacists. That's the simplest to explain. Pharmacists in the civilian world get paid a lot of money. My strategy to attract them is to meet people before they've started their training to be pharmacists. When they're looking at that bow wave of loans and whatnot to get them through their training, then they're interested in subsidized education and a career in the forces. Once they've gone through and they're finished their accreditation and they now see a big salary ahead of them that will pay off whatever debts they may have, they're less interested. It's a bit more transactional. As anyone can see, there are lots of opportunities for pharmacists.

That's how I'm addressing that. I've assigned one officer whose sole job is to flit about the country seeking these people out and encouraging them to join and be pharmacists.

For LCIS tech, I think one of the largest challenges with that is the name, because everyone knows what... I've filled the infantry and the artillery with people wanting to be in the armoured corps, wanting to be combat engineers. I can't take any more in any province. I'm all

full. But LCIS tech doesn't sound like an active combat job, when it really is. If they changed the name to land combat command technician or something, it might be more interesting. Plus, there are educational requirements in this trade that are higher than others.

So what the commander of the army has created is an army signals attraction team with their own vehicles, top-notch people in both their professional performance and appearance, with their vehicles, and they go from place to place, synchronized with my recruiting activities to show off and say this isn't a little computer guy somewhere in a back room. They'd be in a vehicle in the combat zone with antennas and things going on all around them.

That's what I'm doing to show that this particular trade is not a passive one in an office building.

**MGen W. Semianiw:** If you look at the naval stressed trades in particular—this is worth noting for the committee—Commodore MacKeigan did some work to find out the real issue here. We found out that for many—not all—the real issue is grade 10 math.

If you take a look at the current construct—I see it with my own children—there's the option of taking everyday math, college math, or university math. What we need in many of the technical trades are people with university math skills. We've found that there is a cohort, a large group, who have passed everything else, but can't come in because they don't have grade 10 math.

What are we doing? On January 1, he's going to recruit 30. We're going to do a little pilot. Once they finish at CFRS, they're going to go to Borden, where we're going to teach them grade 10 math. It's almost like the fitness approach. We're going to bring people in, select them in, do grade 10 math, run our own little school, get that done, and enrol them.

I think a lot of the naval stressed trades, or some of them, will be addressed in that way. But that's another tangible piece of evidence of what Commodore MacKeigan is doing to address that issue—what's the problem and what's the key to dealing with it.

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Thank you.

Moving to exhibit J and the attrition lines there, I presume that one of the differences between the green and the blue line is that you have retirements in the green line. What are the other differences there?

Second, improving attrition can be like pushing water uphill. You've had some great success here. What are the top two or three things that you've done to improve attrition?

**Mr. Karol Wenek:** First, Mr. Chairman, to refer to exhibit J and give a little explanation, the green line represents actual attrition over the three- to four-year period depicted on the graph. The number one category, as shown in the dotted blue line, is voluntary attrition. That's our biggest source of loss. The second-largest category is medical releases. It's not nearly as large, obviously. Then there's a fair amount of structural attrition due to those reaching retirement age. There were a few administrative cases and disciplinary cases as well, but those are the major categories.

Just to put it all in perspective, even at 8% or so, in comparison to other militaries, whether they're our allies or just other in-front military of other industrial nations, this is a very good number. If you flip it around, it's a retention rate of 92% or better. As well, when we benchmark ourselves against other parts of the private sector, it's also a very good rate.

Obviously we're pleased that attrition has come down. We'd like to keep it down. The kinds of things that we've addressed in our campaign plan really reflect what we've learned over the years in doing research with members and, more recently, with members' families. What issues are the major dissatisfiers that influence a member's decision to leave?

More recently, the number one issue has been issues related to work-life balance. It simply reflects both the high level of operational tempo that the forces have been under for several years and also the personnel tempo. As a result of a number of studies done in previous years, we've really pushed to re-professionalize the Canadian Forces. That means investing in a lot more training and, more specifically, professional educational programs. That all takes time out of a soldier's or officer's day and takes away time that otherwise might be spent with family. So that's an issue that adds to personnel tempo.

Mobility requirements are one of the other issues that force people to consider whether or not they should stay or leave, particularly in the later stages of a career when you have deep community attachments or kids who are in school, as I alluded to previously.

On the kinds of things we're doing particularly in those areas, when we were briefing the Chief of the Defence Staff and the senior leaders of the army, navy, and air force about a year ago, I said, perhaps presumptively, that to resolve the personnel tempo issue there are really only two things you can do.

One is that you can reduce it by stopping operations for a period of time. I think the chief of land staff talked about an operational pause post-Afghanistan, not for long, but just some time for the army to recuperate. Alternatively, you can increase the effective strength significantly in a very short period of time, and that's just not doable.

So the only thing we can really do there is try to mitigate the effects of the personnel tempo or operational tempo and ensure that commanders comply as much as possible with the policy we have in place, which essentially requires the mandatory respite period on return from operations and also a period in which they're exempt for up to a year from being redeployed without special waivers or otherwise being sent away on lengthy professional development courses. That's one area.

With respect to mobility, as I mentioned earlier, that's a little more difficult to deal with. We are looking at developing career employment models that would be more regionally based and would give people more geographical stability. We think this is more important particularly for the senior people rather than the junior people, who may not have developed those deeper community attachments in the early stages of their career.

Then, in the other areas, we are looking, as the general mentioned, at a number of programs that would improve the lives of families and mitigate the stress that the military lifestyle exposes them to. We're

looking at pilot programs with respect to child care, at how we facilitate access to health care, and at what can we do to improve the opportunities of spouses and partners in terms of reacquiring meaningful employment when they move from one location to another.

That's just a sample. There are six major lines of operation, a couple of them focused at the early stages of the career, but there are some 44 initiatives there that are intended to address those issues. Now, you could say, "Look at the percentage you've achieved now, with 7.9% overall and 5.1% voluntary, so why don't you just declare victory?"

• (1035)

Well, to some extent we've benefited from the economic downturn. If you look at exhibit J, the red arrow is pointing to September 2008, which was the beginning of the economic downturn. So there's a very close relationship here. The really big lever in influencing our ability to recruit, to some extent, but more importantly to retain people, is what's going on in the external economy.

So if, as the Conference Board of Canada suggests, we might see a return to a competitive labour market as early as 2011, we have to make sure when that happens that we have done something to address current and ongoing dissatisfaction of military life.

To put that in perspective, when we do surveys on how members feel about military life, they are overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. They feel they're well supported. There's always a minority who don't feel that way. Even some of the surveys we've done with spouses and partners of members have shown that they're very supportive of their spouses and the members' military careers.

So we have some fairly good indicators that we're doing a lot of things right, but as the general and others have said, there's always room for improvement.

• (1040)

**MGen W. Semianiw:** If I can quickly build on that, I have a plan here. Remember, this is more of an art than a science. I can't tell you that by doing everything on our plan here, *les voilà*, everything is going to be great. Nobody can say that. But we've learned in all of this that you have to do everything if you want to at least achieve that.

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

**Mr. Peter Braid:** Thank you very much.

I have one final and equally important question. Is there any way I can sign up for that fitness program?

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**MGen W. Semianiw:** You look pretty fit.

**The Chair:** Major-General, Commander, and Mr. Wenek, thank you for being with us this morning. It was very useful for the members.

Mr. Bachand.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank our weaknesses, as you just did. I do not know if my colleagues have received as many letters as myself about Group Reserves 2000, which is a kind of group representing the reserve. Since the issue was frequently raised today, I think it might be interesting to hear them in the near future since it is somewhat related to our study of recruitment in the armed forces. So, I would suggest that we invite representatives of Group Reserves 2000 in order to complete our work on recruitment and retention. By the way, they did send us letters a long time ago asking to appear before the committee. We might use this opportunity to complete our study.

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

I might add that item 4 of the report of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on National Defense states:

That the Standing Committee on National Defense invite representatives of the Department of National Defense for a two-hour session on the re-hiring by the Department of retired soldiers and public servants.

I know that the clerk is trying to invite those persons for next Tuesday if at all possible. Your suggestion is very timely because, if

they are unable to appear next Tuesday, we might then invite representatives of Group Reserves 2000, since we know that the Minister of National Defense, Mr. MacKay, will be with us on Thursday from 8:30 am to 9:30 am and that, from 9:30 am to 10:30 am, we will be hearing public servants to deal with the Estimates of the Department of National Defense.

So, I would like members of the committee to tell me if they agree with the clerk asking representatives of Group Reserves 2000 to appear before us on Tuesday if members of the Department are unable to join us to talk about the re-hiring all soldiers and public servants.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Thank you. So noted by our clerk.

[*English*]

Thank you very much, and have a good day.

That closes meeting 41.

We are adjourned.

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