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Chair

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin

Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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• (1100)

[Translation]

The Chair (Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP)): Good morning and welcome to the 60th meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Today is Tuesday, February 26, 2013, and we are continuing our study on sexual harassment in the federal workplace, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2).

We welcome representatives from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission. Further to a motion tabled February 7, 2013, a committee member must move a motion in order to hear the three witnesses representing the organization.

Ms. Truppe, the floor is yours.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I MOVE: That, notwithstanding the motion adopted on Thursday, February 7, 2013, the Committee hear the testimony of more than two representatives from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission in relation to the study of sexual harassment in the federal workplace.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Truppe.

I am assuming that all members are in agreement.

(Motion agreed to unanimously)

The Chair: I would like to take this opportunity to make a few committee announcements before we hear the witnesses.

I wish to inform the members that the committee will be sitting on March 5 because one of the witnesses was available only on that date.

We will now proceed. From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission, we will be hearing from Mr. Ian McPhail, Interim Chair, Mr. Richard Evans, Senior Director, and Ms. Lisa-Marie Inman, Director, Reviews and Investigations.

You have 10 minutes to make your presentation, which will then be followed by a question period. I will warn you when you have one minute remaining.

Mr. McPhail, the floor is yours.

[English]

Mr. Ian McPhail (Interim Chair, Chair's Office, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission): Thank you, Madame.

Madame Chair, honourable members, thank you for the opportunity to share with the committee the results of the commission's investigation into workplace harassment in the RCMP.

Given how fundamentally important public support is to the RCMP's ability to carry out its duties and responsibilities, I felt it necessary to initiate a complaint and undertake a public interest investigation following reports that female RCMP members had faced systemic sexual harassment in the workplace.

The commission's investigation focused on the handling of alleged workplace harassment. It included all forms of harassment, not just sexual harassment. The commission examined the adherence to RCMP policies and procedures, the adequacy of those policies, the thoroughness and impartiality of harassment investigations, as well as harassment-related training. In total, the commission reviewed 718 harassment complaints filed between 2005 and 2011. We did not make findings in respect of individual harassment complaints. Nonetheless, we assessed the handling of each complaint filed.

The investigation found that, overwhelmingly, the problem was with abuse of authority—in other words, bullying. The investigation also revealed that most of the alleged harassment occurred between regular RCMP members. Over 60% of complainants and 70% of respondents were uniformed police officers. The gender breakdown of complainants was virtually half male and half female, while respondents were predominantly male. The commission's review also found that most of the harassment complaints were dealt with in accordance with the RCMP's harassment policy. However, that policy was capable of being interpreted in a number of ways, which resulted in it being inconsistently applied.

In undertaking this review, the commission was cognizant that the formal complaint files we received from the RCMP may not reflect all instances of harassment as some people may be reluctant to file a formal complaint for various reasons. In an effort to address potential under-reporting, as well as to elicit feedback, a call for public submissions was made. The commission received 63 submissions and, in turn, conducted a number of interviews with interested parties.

Although the empirical data presented to the commission did not support the belief that the RCMP has a systemic issue with sexual harassment, there is no proof to the contrary. Moreover, the simple perception of the existence of systemic poor treatment of employees by colleagues and supervisors, regardless of gender, has a huge impact on both public confidence and the manner in which the RCMP is regarded.

In addition, and perhaps more importantly, for those employees who suffered harassment or workplace conflict, there is a very real human cost. There is also a tremendous strain on the organization when such serious issues are not addressed in an effective and timely manner. As such, the commission's report urged the RCMP to take a number of concrete and measurable steps to improve its handling of workplace conflict and harassment allegations, including revising the harassment policy to be more inclusive; instituting a system of centralized monitoring and coordination of harassment complaints outside of the divisional chains of command; and establishing an external mechanism for review of harassment decisions, separate from, but not exclusive of, the RCMP's labour relations process.

• (1105)

The commission also recommends that the RCMP develop a comprehensive method to evaluate respectful workplace efforts that is both measurable and quantifiable. The results of such evaluation must be publicly reported.

All of this is intended to enhance the transparency of the process because only if you have what RCMP members themselves see as a fair, open, transparent, and expeditious process will people be comfortable in stepping forward, and the public have confidence in its national police force.

Harassment is a complex problem requiring a complex solution. Policy statements and written procedures are not enough to address this issue. There must be intent on the part of the RCMP to cultivate a more respectful workplace, and that intent needs to be followed up with actions.

I am hopeful that the commission's report and recommendations will help inform the RCMP in its efforts and further build on the commissioner's recently released action plan.

With that, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

• (1110)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now begin the question and answer period.

Ms. Truppe, you have seven minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you, Madame Chair. I would like to welcome our guests today.

"Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace" is the name of our study, and that's what our focus is here. It's a very serious issue and why we're here today and have been here these past few months.

I will start with a quote from my colleague on the other side, Ms. Ashton, at the time of Commissioner Paulson's last visit. Ms. Ashton had indicated that "We all want to see full resources attached to an effort to eradicate sexual harassment and harassment in the force".

I just want to make it clear that Bill C-42 does give the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP an extra \$5 million and the RCMP \$9.8 million, so there is some funding attached.

Mr. McPhail, or Mr. Evans or Ms. Inman if you would like to answer, what impact would Bill C-42, the enhancing RCMP accountability act, have on the organization?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Thank you, Ms. Truppe.

Bill C-42, in our opinion, will have a positive impact on the organization, which is to be recreated as a new civilian review and complaints commission.

Broadly speaking, Bill C-42 will provide the new commission with the power to compel witnesses and testimony. It will give the new commission the ability to instigate broad systemic reviews. It will enable the commission to work more cooperatively and to conduct joint reviews with our provincial counterparts.

All in all, it will result in a much more robust authority for the new body, which I believe will have a positive effect.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you. You just said that it will give you a broader systemic review. Can you elaborate on that? What's the difference?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Yes, let me explain the difference between this particular report and a systemic review.

This report is based on the current authority of the commission to have what is called a chair-initiated complaint. It's not necessary to wait until an individual makes a specific complaint. If the chair of the commission is of the opinion that there is a particular matter that should be investigated, the chair has the authority to institute such a process.

The ability to conduct systemic reviews is broader. It's not necessarily dependent on their being a certain issue. Let me give you an example. Under the authority to be granted by Bill C-42, the new review and complaints commission would have the ability to perform a systemic review of the RCMP's progress in implementing these recommendations and to do a broader review of attitudes and opinions of RCMP members to more accurately determine the full extent of this particular problem.

• (1115)

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Great, thank you.

How does Bill C-42 address the issues outlined in your recommendations?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Bill C-42 gives the RCMP commissioner the authority to implement some of the recommendations. For example, one of the findings of the commission in this report was that there's a multiplicity of processes in place at the present time. For example, in our review of the files we found that complaint investigations took anywhere from two weeks to four years to be completed. Without knowing people's motivations, I think it's a reasonable conclusion to reach that the prospect of spending up to four years involved in a complex and often difficult and stressful legal process might well cause someone just to avoid the process altogether. What Bill C-42 does is give the commissioner the authority to streamline this process. What the commission has done has been to give the commissioner a road map for how to use these new powers. It's then up to the commissioner and the RCMP to implement them.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's very good, thank you. I have one minute left.

You had mentioned that sexual harassment was not systemic. The report did not support the latter claim, though I think you said there was no proof on the contrary. How did you come to this conclusion? Could you give just a very quick response on that?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Very simply, of the files that we reviewed, a full 90% dealt with abuse of authority or bullying. Only 4% dealt with sexual harassment. We also made the point that there are three broad areas. One area is the complaint files themselves. That's what we reviewed. Secondly, there are complaints made that result in informal resolution. At this time there is no record kept of the results of those cases and we recommend that this be done. The third instance would be problems or complaints that aren't made for whatever reason, that is, the under-reporting that I referred to in my opening remarks. It's my belief that it's necessary to have the kind of fair, open, and transparent process that I referred to so that—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I am sorry, Mr. McPhail, but I am going to have to interrupt you. You have gone way past your speaking time already. You will no doubt be able to complete what you were saying in answering other questions.

Ms. Ashton, the floor is yours. You have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Thank you, Mr. McPhail, for joining us today.

The report you released mentioned that only 4% of the complaints came from women and were related to sexual harassment. On the other hand, we know that more than 200 women have started a class action lawsuit on sexual harassment in the RCMP. I'm wondering how you can explain that discrepancy.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Very simply, on the 4%, that's what we found from the 718 files we reviewed. Now very specifically, with respect to the class action law suit, we extended an invitation to the representative plaintiff in that lawsuit because we hoped to meet with her. On the advice of counsel, she declined to do so. In terms of the specific numbers joining in that lawsuit, until it's been certified in accordance with the rules governing class action lawsuits, we won't actually know specifically how many members or former members are joining in that lawsuit.

• (1120)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Do you think women are afraid to come forward?

Mr. Ian McPhail: We don't know. We do sense that there's an underreporting, and we've made that clear. That follows on what I was saying in response to Ms. Truppe's questions concerning what needs to be done within the RCMP in terms of the openness and the fairness of the process to make it clear to members of both genders and of any status within the RCMP that they should feel more confident in coming forward, that they will be dealt with fairly, and that their careers and their lives will not be put on hold for years to come.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I think that's an important point. One of the things we've been hearing from people associated with the RCMP, but also more broadly in the federal workplace, is that when there isn't an indication that perpetrators will be dealt with accordingly and in a serious manner, obviously that is a disincentive to coming forward, amongst other reasons.

My issue is with the reticence to call this a systemic problem. We have a class action law suit. The country has been gripped by the allegations that have come forward. These are the people who we entrust our safety with, and yet even some of these officers' own safety is violated in the most gruesome way. Why were you so quick to say it's not systemic?

Mr. Ian McPhail: We weren't quick to say it's not systemic.

Now, if I can first address the initial part of your question, one of our recommendations dealt with the issue of retaliation. It's part of the complaint structure that we advocate. Very simply, we followed the evidence that was available to us. We acknowledge that the evidence we got did not necessarily provide a complete picture, but it was the best available. We're confident that we received all of the files for the period of time in question. Those files did not reveal a systemic issue of harassment. That having been said, we were very careful to say that because of potential underreporting and the fact that records are not kept in cases of informal resolution, it's not possible to say the contrary definitively either.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Your fourth recommendation reads, "That an external mechanism for review of harassment decisions be implemented." Could clarify this recommendation, what you are talking about and why it's so important?

Mr. Ian McPhail: The key to credibility is independence. Now, the format for that external review can be a senior member of the RCMP, who occupies a position in senior management and is reporting directly. It could be somebody outside the RCMP. But that person should be independent of the divisional chains of command. It cannot be seen as being responsive to other pressures, so the exact format that independence should take is, I think, up to the RCMP.

Further with that, some people had suggested to us that the investigation of harassment complaints, the dealings with these, be completely removed to a separate body. We don't advocate that, and the reason is that we believe it would be a mistake to in effect contract out harassment problems to an outside body. If you contract them out, they're then someone else's responsibility. As part of the creation of a respectful workplace, harassment must be everyone's responsibility.

• (1125)

Ms. Niki Ashton: On that note—this will be a quick question, because I know my time is running out—when it comes to training, do you believe that in-person training when it comes to harassment is necessary?

Mr. Ian McPhail: It's absolutely necessary. In terms of the kind of in-person training that takes place now, there's very good training of cadets when they undergo their training at Depot in Regina. The RCMP has an excellent module of training for managers, but unfortunately only a small minority of managers have taken that training. We advocate that it be rolled out to cover all managers and that follow-up online training be given to members on a regular basis.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. McPhail, I am going to have to stop you there. I apologize.

We will now turn to a member on the government side.

Ms. O'Neill Gordon, you have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to all of you for taking time to be with us.

As you can very well understand, with all this work and study that we're doing, it's very important to all of us that all the public servants be free to face the daily and expected challenges of a day's work without harassment and without fear of mistreatment by colleagues and co-workers or supervisors. I assure you that our government places our whole confidence in the RCMP and in the system. So we thank you for being here, and thank you for the work you are putting forth.

In your report, your first recommendation reads as follows: "That the RCMP implement a systematically compiled and nationally comparable system of data collection and reporting in respect of workplace conflict."

What sorts of recommendations are the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP empowered to make, and will you address policy and procedures, disciplinary measures, and reporting? What measures would you follow?

Mr. Ian McPhail: To begin with, with respect to the specific recommendation that you referred to, I can tell you that the review that the commission performed was the first time, was the first review, that any body analyzed all of the complaint files over a period of time and with a view to assessing how they were handled and how that could be improved.

I would see this as being an ongoing process. No one report is going to solve the problem. No policy statement is going to solve the problem. What needs to be institutionalized within the RCMP—and, frankly, I think this applies to any large organization—is the ability to have proper training, reporting, ongoing monitoring and, at the end of the day, outside review as to how the process has been conducted.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: In your experience so far, what would you say is the one thing that will make the biggest difference in resolving incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace? Is there one thing you can think of?

Mr. Ian McPhail: That's not an easy question, but what I would suggest is perhaps a consciousness on the part of people throughout the organization that individual respect for one's colleagues regardless of rank, regardless of gender, is critical. If there is that kind of respect, which is going to come from leadership and good policy, I think that's what we're all looking for, and which our recommendations are designed to help the RCMP accomplish.

• (1130)

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Yes, and I can assure you that that's probably what we have heard a lot from the other departments. It's things like leadership and the expectations in place that really make a difference in the workplace and how people handle themselves with their co-workers.

You mentioned training. What is the expectation in that regard? Is it done on a yearly basis, is it just when new staff arrive, or how does the training take place in this department?

Mr. Ian McPhail: There are different types of training. There is the training of the investigators themselves. You might think, with a police force of thousands of trained investigators, why added training would be necessary. That's because harassment of whatever type is different in its fundamental nature from criminal investigation. Harassment can of course become criminal, but RCMP members are trained in performing criminal investigations. That involves gathering evidence in preparation for lodging a criminal charge.

With respect to harassment investigations, I believe the goal should be early intervention. So the training of managers can enable the managers to spot the indicia of harassment before it becomes a serious issue. Then in terms of the investigators themselves, the initial steps should be remedial.

Only in the cases where that doesn't work would you then presumably move on to formal disciplinary hearings.

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon: Could you please describe in further detail what you think would be the best way to collect and harness data on sexual harassment in the workplace. Is there any special way we could collect this data, or do you have any special idea?

The Chair: Be very quick.

Mr. Ian McPhail: The data is there, but it's in the divisions. It's not accessible to the commissioner and to the leadership of the RCMP.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now turn to Ms. Sgro. You have seven minutes.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and welcome, Mr. McPhail. I'm really pleased that you accepted our invitation to be here today. I thank you most of all for taking the initiative on your own to go ahead and do that investigation without being asked.

Can you keep your answers as short as possible because seven minutes disappears very quickly?

When was your mandate last reviewed?

Mr. Ian McPhail: There has not been a formal review of the mandate since the commission was established in the 1980s.

Hon. Judy Sgro: In the 1980s. So would you suggest that it might be time to have another look at your mandate given some of the issues we have heard over the last several years?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Absolutely. I believe that Bill C-42 is the culmination of that process.

Hon. Judy Sgro: The issues around Bill C-42 and how thorough and effective that will be all depend on the commissioner. It's still putting the commissioner in charge of everything. It gives him the extra powers, the new powers that he specifically asked for, but it always ends up being totally up to the commissioner how this will go and how thoroughly a lot of these things will actually be enforced, is it not?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Legislation can give tools. Organizations such as the CPC can provide guidance, road maps, and recommendations. I think in any organization there's an issue of leadership, and every organization is dependent on the leadership within that organization to use the tools given to accomplish the goals set forth.

• (1135)

Hon. Judy Sgro: But, in effect, we still have the fox in charge of the henhouse, to put it as bluntly as I can. Of course, ultimately, we want the full support of our leadership, but it does put everything back to the head of the RCMP as to how successful this will be.

Mr. Ian McPhail: With respect to our recommendations, that's not totally correct. Here's where I might differ from you somewhat. The final recommendation we made was that there be ongoing review by an external body. I would anticipate this would be the new civilian review and complaints commission, pursuant to its powers of doing systemic reviews of the progress of the RCMP in implementing the recommendations and dealing with issues of harassment. I would agree with you that there need to be appropriate checks and balances. In my opinion, the new review and complaints commission could provide that check and balance.

Hon. Judy Sgro: How do we know that? How are we going to ensure that it happens? I guess we're always back to checking the one who's checking the other one, and who's checking the one after that.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Well, there's no question that policy is often dependent on the individuals involved. At the end of the day, I think it's up to the Canadian public and their will, as expressed through their parliamentarians, to insist that this take place. I would see what this committee is doing today as part of the checks and balances in the system.

Hon. Judy Sgro: When you talk about the independent commission that you referred to, what do you classify as independent?

Mr. Ian McPhail: I would classify as independent the ability of the commission to perform its mandated function—subject always to requests from the minister or others to perform certain functions—without interference.

Hon. Judy Sgro: I thought your 11 recommendations were all very helpful, including to the government. But when you talked about the external review mechanism of the decisions being implemented, why wouldn't you want that external body to do the complete investigation and subsequent recommendations?

Mr. Ian McPhail: It's for the reason I outlined to Ms. Ashton, which is that it is something that we considered and discussed among ourselves, but by outsourcing that very critical function, it then becomes somebody else's responsibility. I don't think we would want to encourage that particular mindset.

Hon. Judy Sgro: We have independent commissions overseeing police services throughout the country that operate very well, have been very successful, and are at arms' length away and have completed those investigations.

The Chair: A very quick question, please.

Hon. Judy Sgro: What makes the RCMP think they're any different?

Mr. Ian McPhail: I may have misunderstood your question. Very definitely, there needs to be external review of the RCMP's actions. When I answered the question, I was thinking of the conduct of the specific investigations into specific harassment complaints. External review is necessary to determine how effectively those are conducted.

• (1140)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much.

Mr. Ian McPhail: You're welcome.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Ambler, the floor is yours. You have five minutes.

[*English*]

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for being here today. We appreciate it.

My question is on recommendation 11, and specifically data collection. Ms. O'Neill Gordon's last question had to do with that, and I noticed that you were a little rushed in your response. You talked about accessibility and how important it was for the public to be able to access the findings of the data collected.

Since this is a relatively new thing, having started in 2011, I also want to know how you're doing it. What kind of data are important for you to collect? Are you collecting data about the complainants and the departments this is happening in? I want to know what kinds of questions are being asked.

How detailed is the information coming in? How will that ultimately help the way it's collected and accessed?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Ms. Inman led the team of investigators and is very familiar with the data, so I'm going to ask her to respond to that particular question.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you. Please go ahead.

Ms. Lisa-Marie Inman (Director, Reviews and Investigations, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission): Just to clarify, I wasn't sure whether you were referring to how we're collecting data on an ongoing basis, how the RCMP collects data, or how we collected data for this investigation.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: I'm more concerned with how it will be done going forward.

Ms. Lisa-Marie Inman: Okay.

The recommendation we made was directed at the RCMP. The commission itself won't be collecting RCMP data on an ongoing basis, although, as Mr. McPhail mentioned, it will be open to the commission or the future commission to go in and do a specified activities review or a systematic review, at that point, on how the RCMP is doing with its harassment commitments.

Going forward, with respect to the RCMP's data collection, we're suggesting having a centralized system that collects all the data, basically relating to what's currently there, so that it's brought into the centre. By that we mean data about the complainant, what type of issue it is, what the allegations are, what resolution is sought and, most importantly, what ends up happening with the complaints, what steps were followed throughout, and how it was eventually resolved, as well as any details of the investigation.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Thank you.

Do you think that the process as it develops into the system that we will have—which I believe will be more comprehensive than it used to be—will add credibility and lead to the independence that Mr. McPhail talked about? Do you believe there's a direct correlation?

Ms. Lisa-Marie Inman: Our thinking was that when you're able to point to a meaningful set of data that you can be sure is consistently collected and is valid, and you can show what the problem is and how you're dealing with it, that builds credibility in the organization's ability to deal with the issues it faces. We're hoping that this recommendation will contribute to the organization having more credibility among employees in how it is dealing with the issues they bring forward.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Sure. And ultimately it will help indirectly, as well, in that people suffering from harassment will feel more comfortable if they can see the numbers that are being dealt with.

• (1145)

Ms. Lisa-Marie Inman: That's the goal.

Mrs. Stella Ambler: That's good.

Your investigation revealed there were 718 complaints over five years. It was interesting to see that the 4% classified as sexual harassment is consistent with what we've been hearing from other federal departments. Their numbers are more akin to 3%. But I'm not sure—

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Ambler, your five-minute period is over.

[English]

Mrs. Stella Ambler: Really? I was going to get to the systemic issue and whether... Actually, it's been covered a fair bit, but the witness talked about it being a systemic issue, but—

[Translation]

The Chair: I am going to have to cut you off, Ms. Ambler.

We will now turn to Ms. Day. You have five minutes.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to thank the witnesses for coming here today.

My first question is for Ms. Inman.

You are the director of complaints. As a result, you receive complaints. A short while ago, we heard Mr. Paulson, the RCMP Commissioner, testify before the Standing Committee on Public Safety. He stated that he did not believe women were afraid to file a complaint.

Ms. Inman, since you receive complaints, could you tell me whether women are indeed afraid to file a complaint? In addition, if they do contact you, do they ever decide not to go any further out of fear? Have you seen any evidence of that?

Ms. Lisa-Marie Inman: Thank you for your question.

[English]

In my current role at the commission, I don't actually receive complaints. I'm the director of reviews. I'm in charge of complaint reviews when people are dissatisfied with the first resolution of their complaint by the RCMP.

As far as your question is concerned about whether or not women are afraid to come forward to report harassment—and tell me if I'm misphrasing this—while that has come up anecdotally and I'd say that it's likely true, there was no way in our investigation to say what the exact extent of that was.

We had made a public submission process in the hope that people would come forward with their stories, if that is what they had experienced. The public submissions we received didn't actually go to that at all. As a result of what we acknowledged as likely under-reporting, we made the recommendations we did, in the hope that by making the system a bit more credible and robust and having a mechanism to deal with complaints about retaliation, more women, men, or whoever it might be who suffered harassment and were afraid to come forward would step up and be more comfortable in making a complaint.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Thank you.

Mr. McPhail, 4% of complaints are related to sexual harassment. The report mentions that 44% of the 718 files are related to complaints made by women. It is about abuse of authority. I would call that abuse of power, which is illegal, in my opinion.

Of the other 40% that are not complaints due to sexual harassment, are there indicators that show that these complaints could be related to pornography or other elements that do not correspond exactly to the definition of sexual harassment, but in fact are? The definition of harassment is restrictive.

[English]

Mr. Ian McPhail: A number of good points have been raised here. One of the things that we did discover in our review of how other bodies define sexual harassment and harassment in general is that there's a variety of definitions. One of our recommendations in the report was that the RCMP adopt a more specific definition of harassment to give greater guidance on it, because the current more general definition results in inconsistent application.

But to get back to the specific numbers that we discovered, approximately 90% of the files we reviewed related to abuse of authority or bullying of one sort or another, and 4% dealt specifically with cases of sexual harassment. Could there be an overlap between those areas? Certainly, but that's what the actual files told us.

• (1150)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Since I have little time left, I will go quickly.

Mr. McPhail, you do not seem to have the same opinion as Mr. Paulson regarding systemic harassment within the RCMP. The word “systemic” refers to a system. That means discrimination and harassment caused by the system.

Could you put in place data collection that would reveal whether or not there is systemic harassment within the RCMP?

[English]

Mr. Ian McPhail: The problem is that the data are incomplete. So the short answer to your question is no, it's not possible. That's why we have strongly recommended that improved data collection be implemented, because it's only—

[Translation]

The Chair: I have to stop you there, Mr. McPhail. I am sorry. Ms. Day's time is up.

We have one last round of questions.

Ms. Young, you have five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): I'd like to thank the panel for coming today because as a member of Parliament from B. C., this issue is obviously very top of mind and important to us. I've been very, very impressed by your proactive and measured response to this very large issue. The fact that you went ahead and did this report is quite incredible, including the fact you have statistics now and some concrete evidence with which to back up your reporting to us. I think that's very commendable.

I wanted to quote your conclusion. You say the following in your report: The RCMP bears a responsibility to foster public trust to the extent possible, and when the public perceives that the organization is unwilling to adequately protect and discipline its own employees, it is difficult to see how their interactions with the police and trust in the organization would remain unaffected. It is for this reason that swift and effective action must be taken by the RCMP in terms of dealing with workplace conflict and harassment, and taken in a manner that engenders the confidence of both members and the public.

And of course we fully support that conclusion, which is part reason why we're doing this study.

I know that you've spoken about this earlier, but I want to give you some more time. Does Bill C-42 answer this question of restoring public trust and give you, as a large organization with some of these issues, the tools to address the issues found within the force?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Very simply, I believe that Bill C-42 will give the commissioner of the RCMP the tools that he or she requires to perform his or her duties. It will provide the tools that we believe are necessary to enable the commissioner to streamline an extremely convoluted process.

You clearly reviewed the report and in one of our charts we tried to illustrate the complaints process. It's actually far more complex than even that chart would suggest.

Ms. Wai Young: Like many members of the public, I was actually very shocked that it would take a four-year process, all kinds of legal machinations, and a very dispersed process, as you were saying, across the country, for people to get their issues acknowledged or even their cases lodged.

Bill C-42 gives the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP an extra \$5 million and the RCMP an extra \$9.8 million. Will this address the issue? Will it restore public confidence?

Mr. Ian McPhail: If properly used, the answer is, I think, yes.

The additional funding has to be intelligently used. As I said, Bill C-42 provides the tools for the commissioner to do so, and in my opinion this report provides a road map for the commissioner on how to move towards this goal, which I think everyone here, regardless of affiliation, shares.

• (1155)

Ms. Wai Young: Because timing is of the essence right now, because I've only got five minutes, I'm going to move on.

Other departments that have come before us, like Canada Post, etc., have indicated that their high levels of good and best practices and positive outcomes have been because of training and leadership, two things that you've identified that the RCMP needs to do. I see that you've done so already. As of November 2012, I understand that 94% of the employees had already taken mandatory online training. Is that correct?

Mr. Ian McPhail: That's correct.

Ms. Wai Young: So do you feel that the RCMP has moved quickly—and therefore the government—to address the need to restore confidence in our national police force? Yes or no?

Mr. Ian McPhail: The short answer would be yes.

Ms. Wai Young: We also have in front of us an international report looking at best practices in other countries around the world, as well as the United Nations. When I read that report and I distill what you've suggested in your report and what we have done via Bill C-42, would you say that you finally have the resources and the tools necessary to align the RCMP's procedures and policies and what it needs to do to bring itself into 2012-2013 and beyond, by centralizing responsibility and accountability in this manner?

Mr. Ian McPhail: If Bill C-42 does give the commissioner the tools necessary to do the job, we have provided the road map. In addition, Bill C-42 gives the new civilian review and complaints commission the ability to follow up and provide the necessary checks and balances. The new funding will certainly enable the commission, and I trust the RCMP, to do that job.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I have to stop you there. I am sorry. To help people, I let them know when they have one minute left.

There are only two minutes left for Ms. Freeman. It is really only two minutes because we are going to change panels after.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. McPhail, your report recommends that the RCMP implement a data collection system for workplace conflicts. The data would be compiled systematically and it would be comparable nationally. You also recommend that a report on the subject be prepared. To what degree have those recommendations been implemented? What about the others?

In addition, can we expect data collection that indicates what is related to sexual harassment in all the data on harassment?

[*English*]

Mr. Ian McPhail: Because time is short, I will be very specific.

With respect to the first question, I believe that you should address it to the commissioner regarding his progress in implementing that particular recommendation.

With respect to the second question, there's no reason why—in fact, it definitely should be the case that the compilation of harassment information and records should spell out the types of harassment that the complaints deal with....

Ms. Mylène Freeman: I have a final question, then.

Given the lack of information that we currently have, we assume that there are people who are not coming forward and that this is part of the problem as well. Do you think that the collection of data would increase confidence and would lead more women coming forward? Would it lead to more women wanting to join the RCMP?

Mr. Ian McPhail: It's not possible to separate one from the other. The collection of data is necessary to give the commissioner and the senior leadership of the RCMP the information they need, because you can't address a problem if you don't know the extent of the problem. But all of the recommendations are important, right through to better training, the independence of the investigatory process, and the checks and balances to be provided by the new civilian review and complaints commission.

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. McPhail. It is not that this is not interesting, but our time is limited.

This is the end of the first part of this meeting. Thank you very much for having taken the time to answer our questions this morning.

I will suspend the meeting for a few minutes to give the other witnesses time to come in. We know that the meeting is televised. Therefore, there are technical aspects to consider. It will also give members time to go get something to eat.

● (1200)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (1200)

● (1205)

The Chair: I invite people to please take their seats. The more time we have with the commissioner, the better.

Good afternoon, everyone. We are beginning the second part of our 60th meeting. Without further ado, I would like to introduce Bob Paulson, who is appearing before the committee for the second time since I have been chair. Welcome, Mr. Paulson. Mr. Paulson is the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Mr. Paulson, I think you are now a regular at these meetings. You have 10 minutes to make your presentation, and afterward we will move to the question portion. You have the floor.

Commissioner Bob Paulson (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Madam Chair, members of the committee, thank you for having invited me to speak to you today.

[*English*]

Madame Chair and committee members, thank you for inviting me here today.

Earlier this morning I appeared before your colleagues at the Public Safety and National Security committee, where I spoke of the CPC's recently released report on harassment within the RCMP, and what I'm doing about it. I raised and we discussed our action plan entitled "Gender and Respect", in which I have tremendous confidence. I believe this plan will help me address issues relating to both the culture and the composition of the RCMP. I'd be happy to discuss these things further with you.

One of the action items in our plan calls for the ramping up of the intake of females in the force to 50% within two years so we can reach a 30% level of female police officers by 2025.

I've been getting a lot of raised eyebrows and skeptical reactions to this goal. People say that there aren't that many women interested in policing and that I'm setting myself up for failure. I disagree. I have challenged my recruiting personnel to bring some innovation to our recruiting strategies and I've challenged our senior leaders and human resources personnel to develop our workplace such that it is respectful of the people who make up the team, regardless of gender.

Policing in today's reality is frankly as challenging and as rewarding a career as there is in Canada right now. It is not for everybody, that's true, which is not to say that it is a man's domain. It is a profession that is in dire need of smart, honest, community-minded, compassionate, resilient, and persistent people.

The RCMP is making progress in bringing about positive change, but there is a lot to do.

[*Translation*]

It is making progress in bringing about positive change, but there is a lot to do.

[English]

Our mission meanwhile is to keep Canadians safe in their homes and their communities. Not a day goes by that I am not amazed and inspired by the work our men and women do to deliver on this mission for all Canadians.

I look forward to our discussions today and I'd be pleased to take your questions.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paulson.

We will start now with Ms. Crockatt. You have seven minutes.

[English]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Thank you very much, Commissioner, for being here. I'm very impressed by the RCMP's testimony today.

One of the things that we heard earlier was basically the size of this issue. Our government does take sexual harassment in the workplace very seriously. It's important that we lock in where the issues lie so that we can make sure we are moving forward in the right way.

We have heard that sexual harassment is about 4% of the overall abuse complaints, which is pretty consistent with what we've been hearing, of 3% to 4%. Is that your understanding as well?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes it is, Madam Chair. The 4% is number from the files reviewed by the CPC. I think our number, when we did the overall review.... I don't take issue with 4%; it's in the area of 4%, yes.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Okay, so that's about 29 cases per year.

There was some discussion about whether there were some people who were not coming forward. But then I think that Ms. Inman suggested that wasn't the case when they opened it up to people. Are you confident that in the system we are getting sexual harassment fully reported?

Commr Bob Paulson: I would have to say a qualified no to that. I know that it is a very difficult issue to unpack in the workplace. I think we've done a lot of work towards reassuring folks that the process and the organizational response won't be an impediment to people coming forward, but sometimes there are other inhibitors that may restrict people, just the embarrassment, perhaps, or other drivers.

So while I'm confident that we do not have a situation where people need to fear coming forward, I don't think I can say unequivocally that people who are affected are all coming forward.

• (1210)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: You talked about the process and the response. Can you describe the findings of the gender-based analysis and the action plan that was released with regard to the process? Are people familiar with the process? Do you think the process is a good one?

Commr Bob Paulson: Very briefly on the gender analysis, it found some things that were outside of this discussion around harassment and sexual harassment. Frankly, it found that our policies and our practices were generally bias-free in terms of gender issues.

There are a number of other troubling things that came forward, not unlike what the CPC discovered. I think I heard Mr. McPhail referring to a problem of bullying, and I've described it as misuse of authority and so on.

So the gender action plan, "Gender and Respect" as it's entitled, sets out to take on a whole bunch of issues beyond the harassment and sexual harassment issues, towards going towards a respectful workplace. A number of things are contemplated in that report.

I know there are 37 action items. Many of them deal with how we respond and will respond to harassment complaints, what kind of standards and investigative standards we would have in response to some of these things, timelines, and so on. So we've taken a big step forward to try to put some objective analysis around the organizational response to harassment, but beyond that, I think we have to recognize that there are behaviours that have to be modified to prevent workplace conflict and harassment.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: I'm glad you raised the issue of bullying. That's what you describe as misuse of authority and bullying, essentially they are the same thing, so that is predominantly the largest part of the case. It's 90%.

How are people going to be able to bring these cases forward to resolution? Apparently the systemic issues regarding that are something that you're really looking at.

Commr Bob Paulson: Any number of ways. Of course there are existing ways of making a complaint to people outside of the chain of command, but we've even begun to provide for confidential reporting lines and other means of having people identify those. I think we also have a responsibility to drive the reforms from the top down so that the people who are misusing authority, the people who have a misunderstanding of what their job is, are not committing those sorts of conditions in the first place.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: How are you going to do that?

Commr Bob Paulson: By effective leadership, accountability, and oversight. For example, I've restructured the organization in terms of having all the commanding officers report directly to me. We meet frequently, and I can go directly into an issue and make sure they are delivering on what my expectations are.

That, I expect—without sounding overly militaristic—is how we're going to do this. We're going to move the leadership yardsticks forward by leading the organization.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Are you raising these issues of bullying when you meet with them directly one on one, on a consistent basis?

Commr Bob Paulson: On a consistent basis, what I'm raising is style of leadership, employee engagement, and respect for other people in the workplace. That's consistently a discussion we have.

I don't discuss bullying per se every time, but we're focused on making sure the organization is benefiting from modern leadership approaches to running a big organization like we have.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Moving to a larger number of women in the RCMP with your recruitment targets, are you doing an appropriate thing to make sure people are ready to accept that degree of women, if you have that kind of a take-up? That is a fairly significant change.

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, I think so. There's more work to be done and we are looking at changing our HR practices to accommodate—not to accommodate, but to react to that changing reality, I suppose, through transfers, job sharing, and a number of strategies that we already have, but providing for a modern workplace.

•(1215)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Lastly, what are some of the attributes that females bring to “RCMPing”? That's a new verb.

Commr Bob Paulson: “RCMPing”, that's a p-verb.

I'll tell you that the value of having women in a police role is that you take the interaction with a citizen away from the force dynamic and you put it in the behaviour, thoughtful dynamic. It is quite a powerful force to be reckoned with. We have this traditional notion that we're wrestling people and jumping on people and putting handcuffs on people, but the woman's view of the world is a much more powerful, persuasive force than just an arm around the neck. And they represent half the—

[Translation]

The Chair: Unfortunately, I have to interrupt you, Mr. Paulson, because Ms. Crockatt's time is done.

A little earlier, I told you you had one minute left, but I thought it was a five-minute round. I apologize for saying there was one minute left when there were three.

We will now go to the official opposition with Ms. Ashton. You have seven minutes.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton: Thank you.

We're glad to have you here again, Commissioner Paulson.

We just heard from Mr. McPhail, and he stated that there is no systemic problem of harassment within the RCMP. When you've spoken in the past, many times you've referred to a cultural dysfunction. To a lot of people there's a parallel between these two concepts. I'm wondering, if there is no systemic harassment crisis, as Mr. McPhail says, what is helping to contribute to the cultural dysfunction you see.

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think that's right. I don't think there is a systemic sexual harassment problem in the RCMP. We can maybe debate words around what the problem is. I've described it as misuse of authority. Mr. McPhail refers to bullying. Other people may refer to it as harassment. It's a deterioration of that use of authority in our hierarchy. I've often referred to it as “absent principle, absent analysis, absent evidence, do as I say because I'm the boss”. Police officers are required to do their investigations individually and make important decisions. So I think that use of authority is at odds with that sort of independence.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Do you think there's a gendered element here, though? There's systemic sexism that one could point to. We've heard from others in other areas that when you have men in an overwhelming number of decision-making positions, you end up having an imbalance that can create an environment where not just harassment but that full spectrum of sexist behaviour can take place. When you talk about the abuse of authority, shouldn't we look at it with a gender lens?

Commr Bob Paulson: Well, I think we are looking at it through a gender lens. I don't know, though, that it is as broad and perhaps as deep-rooted as some would have us believe. I think it's a problem. I think we're transitioning from an older sort of paramilitary, male-dominated force to a new, modern police force that is gender-free. There are legacies; there's no question about it. It continued to be male dominated at the very senior ranks, and it's something we're going to have to fix.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I think the gender-free statement poses problems because when we're talking about the need to do a gender-based analysis you need.... I know the RCMP has been involved with the gendered lens, and that's important to assess where we're at today.

But having said that, I did want to move on to another question.

The fourth recommendation by Mr. McPhail spoke of an external review mechanism for harassment that would be independent. Do you agree with the importance of that? Mr. McPhail said that the key to credibility was independence. How do you see that recommendation coming into reality and is that important to you?

•(1220)

Commr Bob Paulson: I think it is. I think the element of independence in ultimately reviewing the force's response to harassment complaints and the disposition on some of these complaints is important.

For example, I think there's a wide range of understanding of how that independence would be brought to bear, from independent outside-the-force investigators for harassment complaints to the existing mechanism that we have today, the external review committee that ultimately reviews these things, and the Federal Court, which has weighed in on some of these things. The CPC now and in its new iteration as the civilian complaints review body will be available to do these independent reviews.

I think it's important. It's important to confidence within the force and from outside the force.

Ms. Niki Ashton: In today's news cycle there was a reference to the RCMP expecting a cut of \$58 million. Have you heard of that figure? You've got some very bold recruitment targets here, and financial resources will obviously be necessary to get on with that, never mind the actual process of dealing with sexual harassment. We're talking about the funds that are necessary here and yet we hear news of this cut.

Have you heard about this potential cut and could you tell us about the importance of having a strong financial base to do the work you need to do?

Commr Bob Paulson: I have not heard of a cut of \$58 million, so I'll have to be on my Berry as soon as I'm done here.

That said, we have contributed and participated in our end-of-the-deficit reduction exercise. We are well positioned to achieve those goals.

As I said earlier this morning, I don't think this transformation turns on resources particularly. There will be some need for resources. As some said this morning, there's almost \$10 million provided for in the new Bill C-42, and that's to do a number of things.

So I don't think it turns on resources; it turns on the attentiveness of managers and executives to deliver on this action plan and to report it to folks such as you.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Regarding the message that we've gotten that women are often afraid to come forward about harassment and abuse, two weeks ago the Human Rights Watch report came out about the harrowing experience of aboriginal women in northern B.C., and again there's this idea of their being afraid to come forward.

I'm wondering if you support the Human Rights Watch recommendation to curb alleged abuse against women and girls, and specifically aboriginal women and girls, and this notion of bolstering training to counter racism and sexism in the treatment of aboriginal women and girls by RCMP officers.

Commr Bob Paulson: Let me just say, look, I am against the abuse of women, girls, humans. That's our job, frankly, as a police force, to intervene when those kind of situations arise.

I'm very troubled. I said that this morning and I'll say it again now. I'm very concerned with this notion that citizens are somehow afraid to come forward with allegations of abuse at the hands of the police. That's very troubling at a very significant level. That's not my experience and that's not my officers' experience in some of these areas, that people are afraid to come forward.

I think we need to understand that better. We need to have all of the facts available to do a complete assessment as to what is giving people the idea that they should be afraid of coming forward.

[Translation]

The Chair: I am sorry, but I have to interrupt you. I apologize. The time you had is in fact up.

We now go to Ms. Bateman, who has seven minutes.

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Is it seven minutes or five minutes?

The Chair: You have seven minutes.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Paulson, thank you for being here today.

[English]

This is such a very important subject, and that's why we're here. I have a number of things I want to touch on, sir.

First of all, on the resourcing, I want to commend you for the comment you made previously about how this isn't a resourcing issue, and that it's important enough that you would reallocate resources to these issues.

The \$15-million reduction is news to me too, because my understanding is that we're giving \$5 million to the complaints commission and \$9.8 million to you, sir, to use effectively. I also understand that this morning in the public safety committee, the NDP were very concerned about that investment of funds. You can't have the resources if you don't put them on the table, and we are trying, with Bill C-42, to put them on the table for you.

I'm grateful that you are modernizing and embracing a more comprehensive governance oversight strategy. As you very rightly point out, these are 50% of your clients. Very briefly, how is this \$9 million going to be deployed? Will it be on training? Just briefly, you've already implemented in B.C. some training and investigators' training. Give a few examples of how this \$9.8 million is going to be used proactively and preventatively.

• (1225)

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the question.

The \$9.8 million goes to the implementation of Bill C-42. The lion's share of that money will go to training and preparation of our NCOs.

One of the themes of this new legislative scheme is to allow for conduct management at the lowest possible level at the earliest possible time. In order to achieve that, we need to have our corporals and sergeants, who have somehow stepped back a little bit from their responsibility to look after the people they are in charge of, trained up on how to faithfully implement the new approach to conduct management.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Is this mandatory now?

Commr Bob Paulson: Well, not until the act comes into force, but it will be, yes.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: It will, with Bill C-42.

Commr Bob Paulson: We are preparing. In fact, we have a huge working group that's preparing a number of things to manage the new relationship, for example, with the CPC as it becomes the civilian review and complaints body. That's going to be able to walk into the organization and do policy-based reviews on things that interest Canadians, you, or them.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You've already made an assessment of the effectiveness of the training you're about to put in, and 94% of your employees have taken some.

Commr Bob Paulson: That's a little bit separate. That's mandatory harassment training we get everybody trained on, what the rules are, what the prevention is, what the identification systems are, what the reporting streams are. There's 94% compliance with that harassment training.

Our training in the Bill C-42 regime will be much more broad across the force and somewhat revolutionary in bringing the discipline and conduct management down to the front line.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: And that's how it's effective.

As you said, 51% of the population is female. The point was made earlier by a colleague that there's a concern about women. I recognize the statistics that were prepared in the commission's study, that some 44% of the complainants are female and some 49% are male. That speaks to the importance of not just having a female filter on this. Could you speak to that briefly?

Commr Bob Paulson: That's exactly right. Sexual harassment has its own connotation of being completely unsatisfactory. Harassment more broadly, as we've been talking about it, that being bullying and misuse of authority, affects everybody equally. I think it goes to how we interact with each other, the respectful workplace approach that we're deploying across the country right now to modify our workplace such that people are working together as a team, irrespective of gender.

Ms. Joyce Bateman: You'll be using the investments from Bill C-42 to ensure that respectful workplace environment throughout.

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, and early intervention systems in offices to resolve workplace conflict before it becomes a formal complaint and heads off....

Ms. Joyce Bateman: One of your colleagues—I forget her exact title—Sharon Woodburn, came and spoke to us. She mentioned that she was confident in the system. From the work that you're doing in training investigators on harassment, training harassment advisers, training people on how to conduct themselves in a respectful workplace, do you have projections? Obviously, you want everybody to feel comfortable and to trust the system. Is that part of the work of Bill C-42?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, I think that Bill C-42 will allow me to develop some flexibility in reacting to the workforce today and into the future. Our action plan, which I've spoken of in my opening comments, also sets some very real targets for us. For example, we're shooting to reduce our harassment complaint intake across the board. We need to track those things, we need to understand them, and we need to demonstrate success there.

• (1230)

Ms. Joyce Bateman: Could you just speak to the governance changes, broadly, that you're instituting? We have a minute.

Commr Bob Paulson: The governance changes in the force, or in respect of...?

Ms. Joyce Bateman: With respect to how it's going to strengthen the ability to have a respectful workplace, for both men and women in the RCMP.

Commr Bob Paulson: The way I've approached it is to have my COs, each one of them, for each division—which corresponds to a province or territory, with the exception of A division—deploy a respectful workplace strategy that is monitored by us at headquarters. The strategies feature the engagement of employees, the creation of employee advisory groups, mechanisms for raising issues that employees are experiencing, and governing the workplace and how they interact, and explaining to them how we're tracking harassment complaints, how we're tracking discipline issues, and so on.

[Translation]

The Chair: I have to interrupt you, Ms. Bateman. Your time is up.

We go now to Ms. Sgro, who has seven minutes.

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much.

Commissioner, thank you very much for coming again. I hope you will have the same courage to answer some of our questions that you had when you were initially here, the last time. We very much appreciated that. I have to say that you have a huge challenge in front of you.

We saw a full page in the *National Post* this week on whether we should get rid of the RCMP. There were a whole lot of comments in there. The RCMP represents, for all of us as Canadians, something that we're immensely proud of. That's been tremendously tarnished, not only by the sexual harassment, but also by a lot of the harassment complaints and so on that have come out. The government responded following your last meeting by introducing Bill C-42. There's some money in the budget to help you in all that.

How are you going to convince a young woman in Alberta who's a member of your police service who's being harassed by her supervisor, who's also her detachment commander, that she's safe to go ahead and lodge this complaint? How are you going to build the trust, not only of Canadians, but of all of the men and women in the service out there who are under-reporting. We know that goes on, because people do not report these things until they reach a point where they can't handle them anymore. Where is she going to go when it's her own detachment commander who's the one doing the harassing in a small, rural Alberta area?

Commr Bob Paulson: I have two answers. One is that she's going to have a number of avenues available to her, from picking up the phone to making a confidential report into the centre of the organization so that it goes around that officer in charge.

But more importantly, I want to address your question about having our members, our employees, having the confidence to raise these issues. I know intuitively that there is a reluctance to complain against authority. I get that. But we have, and we continue to build, a number of strategies from employee consultative groups, to anonymous means of complaining, to having an increased level of oversight and supervision and leadership on that detachment commander. I don't want to have a condition where anybody feels that if they're being bothered, harassed, or put out, they're incapable of coming forward, or the organization is incapable of taking their complaints.

Hon. Judy Sgro: It's about an atmosphere. You can have all the policies you want. It's about an atmosphere where things are either acceptable or not. Clearly, a lot of unacceptable practices have been allowed to continue because, you know, men are men and women are women and things just happen. The question becomes, as we move forward, that right after this issue broke out you appointed a female officer in senior command and she subsequently retired right after—she retired last April—and her job was to look into these issues. Now, that's been almost a whole year, and nobody has been put back into the position of looking specifically into these issues.

It doesn't send out a good message to people in the rank and file that you're serious about this. How do you answer that question?

• (1235)

Commr Bob Paulson: Well, I'm disappointed, Ms. Sgro, that you would suggest that Line Carbonneau retired right after.... Line Carbonneau stood up. She volunteered to take this on and to begin to lay the groundwork for all the things we're doing now. She is a first-rate officer, a great colleague, and she's done some important work. As for suggestion that she retired right after, I had to persuade her to stick around. I'm grateful to Line Carbonneau and I'm grateful for the things she helped us lead.

I don't accept that people look at Line Carbonneau's departure as anything less than the culmination of a very successful career of one of the first women to join the RCMP. You have to remember that we're just coming to the end of one cycle of careers—if lifetimes can be measured in careers—for women in the force, and Line succeeded tremendously.

So we're building—

Hon. Judy Sgro: But she hasn't been replaced.

Commr Bob Paulson: She has been replaced. Her job was replaced. Peter Henschel went into her job, and he's doing a fine job there.

If your point is that we need more deputy commissioners on the senior executive committee, I agree with you. I don't have any serving women as a deputy commissioner. I have two equivalent deputy commissioners who are civilians and public servants, but I need sworn officers at the senior executive table.

If that's your point, I'm on it.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Well, if 50% of your men and women have been with you, as I understand, for less than five years, how are you possibly going to get these new officers up into management positions in the future? How are you going to move them up beyond a basic level?

Commr Bob Paulson: The action plan discusses that at some considerable length, and I'll briefly describe it.

We have a good feeder pool, if I can use the term, of candidates at the NCO and senior NCO levels. We have to get those folks interested in the commissioned officer ranks. Many of them are interested, but not enough of them, so we are tasking our COs and senior officers to embark on a mentoring program of reaching out to the talented candidates and bringing them along.

Then, when they get into the officer corps, we need to be developing those people, by special consideration, for exposure to

certain jobs, such as by transferring them to a command position, or mentoring, and getting them ready for the senior executive. We're well positioned, although you wouldn't be able to tell it by looking at the senior executive committee right now. But we're well positioned, and we have a good succession plan to do just that. But I agree that we're short at the senior executive rank.

Hon. Judy Sgro: I am continually concerned because we don't have a completely independent commission that looks over the RCMP, in the same sense that the Toronto Police Service has, and many of the police services across the country do. Or they at least have a union that oversees and provides a vehicle for various of the issues that you are trying to deal with now.

Do you not think that would be helpful to you as an organization? Especially if you're trying to establish a new direction under your leadership, would that not be helpful to you and the organization to have that?

Commr Bob Paulson: I misunderstood your question.

Do you mean an independent commission to oversee the RCMP?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Yes.

Commr Bob Paulson: Well, you just heard from them.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Yes, on that one there, but an arm's-length one, farther away from....

Who's going to appoint the people on the current one that you're referring to, from Bill C-42?

Commr Bob Paulson: Not me.

Hon. Judy Sgro: So they'll be arm's-length from you?

Commr Bob Paulson: Absolutely.

Hon. Judy Sgro: And what are your comments on having a unionized workforce in the RCMP?

Commr Bob Paulson: That's not for me to decide whether our employees unionize or take advantage of the existing approach, which is the staff representative system. That's for them to decide.

I agree with the idea that members need to be represented. Our employees need to be represented with management, and how they do that is up to them.

[Translation]

The Chair: I will have to stop you there, Mr. Paulson, because Ms. Sgro's time is up.

I would ask members to be a bit more attentive. When I say "one minute," it's because you have one minute left. Thank you.

We go now to Ms. James, who has five minutes.

•(1240)

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome back, Commissioner Paulson.

I don't think anyone has touched base on the particular topic of your zero tolerance policy. I believe it was back in November that we were told that the policy was actually being enforced.

I'm wondering if you could talk about or comment on the value of that type of policy. Is that still first and foremost when dealing with issues and talking about workplace harassment, whether sexual harassment or bullying, or whatever the case may be? I wonder if you could comment on that and whether that's still at the top of the list of things you're enforcing.

Commr Bob Paulson: I think the zero tolerance approach is better understood as one where we are making sure that all of our supervisors and leaders are acting proactively when they see circumstances that may give rise to some of those complaints, and that when people do make complaints they'd better be acting on them in accordance with our policies and our best practices and so on. So that's how I understand the zero tolerance approach to these kinds of discipline and harassment issues.

But I think that what we are trying to do, more broadly, is to get our leaders and our members, frankly, engaged in these issues, to make sure that even the entry-level constable has a full understanding of what harassment is and what the dynamics of a workplace are, how workplace conflict can lead to these sorts of protracted problems. So we're doing that at Depot, we're doing that in field training, we're doing that with supervisors at their first level entry into the corporal supervisory world, we're doing that with middle managers, and we're doing it with executives.

That's what we need. We've tinkered and we have a plan to refine our process in response to some of these complaints, but I'm much more interested in avoiding these complaints, and that will come from the behaviours of the officers in the workplace.

Ms. Roxanne James: Thank you very much. We've actually heard numerous witnesses stress the importance of being proactive and dealing with a situation at the very lowest level and making sure that employees recognize the signs of harassment and that it doesn't escalate to a higher degree, which we now have seen.

I'm not sure if it was to one of my colleagues to someone across the floor, but you mentioned with regard to Bill C-42 that part of that is going to involve training leaders, or different levels within the RCMP, about different policies. I'm glad that you did mention that. Thank you for that.

We actually heard from Ian McPhail in the previous hour, and I'm going to try to quote him. I wrote it down in scratchy writing, which I'm going to try to read. He indicated that Bill C-42 is part of the process and that it's going to give the Commissioner of the RCMP the tools to perform his duties, and the right tools to streamline a very convoluted process.

Do you agree with that statement?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, I do.

Ms. Roxanne James: So when we talk about a convoluted process, we're talking about the process of how we've been dealing with sexual harassment and harassment. The measures within Bill C-42 and the additional funding are going to assist in that particular application.

Questions have come up at committee a number of times, from the other side, with respect to there being too much power or authority left in one person or office's hands. Bill C-42 is actually going to assist in centralizing the responsibility and the accountability into one office, and that office is yours. Do you have any concerns about that?

The question is that someone has to be in charge. At the end of the day, someone ultimately has to be in charge of something, regardless of whether it's this or any other factor in our day-to-day life. Someone has that responsibility. Do you think that responsibility does lie within your office and is that the right direction to go in?

Commr Bob Paulson: I think it is. I've heard similar criticism. There's a concern that too much power is being centralized in my office. I don't think that stands the test of examination because there are ample mechanisms for accountability as well with that increased authority I'm going to be asked to discharge.

What's more important from all this is that it will give me and the force in the future the flexibility to adapt. We've been stuck with this sort of antiquated system of discipline and human resource management because it's statutorily prescribed. Now the strategy is one that is going to use regulations and commissioner's standing orders to allow us to react to a changing environment and changing workplaces. So the accountability to the external review committee, to the....

I'll stop talking.

•(1245)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paulson. Thank you, Ms. James.

You see, when I don't say there's one minute left, it doesn't go well. We don't know how much time is left. It is my mistake.

We go now to Ms. Ashton, who will, I think, share her time with Ms. Day. You have a total of five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton: I have a couple of quick questions from my side, Commissioner.

I'm guessing that you realize that Bill C-42 doesn't actually make any reference to sexual harassment. So here we are talking about a piece of legislation that is meant to deal with it but doesn't actually mention the problem.

Do you feel we're moving fast enough, whether it's the mandating from the Minister or Parliament and the RCMP, to curb sexual harassment in the RCMP?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, I think we are. The bill also doesn't say anything about police officer corruption or police officers doing burglaries or police officers assaulting people, but it's understood that the conduct and the discipline that is attached to our employees in discharging their duties as police officers is what's being centrally considered. That includes harassment and harassing behaviour, including sexual harassment.

Ms. Niki Ashton: One might say, though, that sexual harassment, of course, is the elephant in the room, or in this case it's what we talk about as a principal focus, so the fact that it's actually missing from a bill that's meant to deal with it is problematic. That's one of the points we've raised.

I just want to go back, Commissioner, to the final point around missing and murdered aboriginal women. Next week at the UN commission, this is going to be a major issue for Canada. When we're talking about women being afraid to come forward, which is similar to the situation of officers in their instances of sexual harassment, what is the RCMP doing on the ground in places like northern B.C., or even where I come from in northern Manitoba, in terms of training? What is being done within the RCMP so that people feel they can come forward?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for that question, because the RCMP is very active in training our members and in insisting that our members are plugged into their communities where they have the responsibility of policing. So our members get front-line training in terms of awareness issues and cultural-sensitivity issues. Across this country, we bring in people from the groups that we are asked to police to help train our officers in sensitivity issues and issues unique to those cultures.

As I did this morning, I will point to Project Devote in Manitoba, which is looking at missing and murdered aboriginal women there; Project KARE in Alberta, and formerly one in Manitoba; Project Even-Handed in British Columbia, and the Highway of Tears investigation—E-PANA as it's called. All have very sophisticated, elaborate, deliberate outreach programs into those communities, because we recognize that we're not going to solve those crimes and those terrible circumstances without the engagement of those communities. My officers and I have been to the north frequently. I have met with my officers, and I would invite you and your colleagues to come out to Prince George, to spend the night with us in a police car, to see what we do, and to see how we interact with these people, because it's not accurately reflected in some of the reports that you've been reading.

Ms. Niki Ashton: I would quickly add that it was problematic that we heard that the RCMP was challenging the figure of 600 plus women, when in fact city police from across the country are involved with this matter as well and have their own figures. When we're talking about the importance of dealing with women, whether they're —

[Translation]

The Chair: I am sorry, but Ms. Truppe has a point of order.

[English]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Madam Chair, we're talking about sexual harassment in the federal workplace, and if we're going off on another tangent, we're not on the same page.

[Translation]

The Chair: I could have said the same thing to Ms. James, but I understand your concerns.

Ms. Ashton, I would ask you to ensure that your questions deal directly with the subject of sexual harassment.

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton: I don't think it's a tangent at all. I'll pass it on to my colleague.

[Translation]

The Chair: I see we have another point of order.

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: On a point of order, sorry to interrupt, but I just heard you say you could have said the same thing to Ms. James. What did I say that was out of line with regard to RCMP and so forth?

[Translation]

The Chair: Yes, in fact, your questions focused much more on Bill C-42 than on sexual harassment. I let you continue because I thought that at some point there would be a link to sexual harassment. That is what happened. I asked the same thing of Ms. Ashton.

Do you have any other questions, Ms. James?

• (1250)

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: I just find it funny that you singled me out when other members of this committee have also mentioned Bill C-42 and the effects and the direction that bill has taken. So I would respectfully ask you to take that back.

Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: I refuse to withdraw my comments. I am sorry, Ms. James.

In fact, other members discussed Bill C-42 in relation to sexual harassment.

This is unfortunate because the commissioner is with us and we are wasting time. I will repeat what I told you. I thought you were taking a lot of time, but I listened to you thinking that at some point, you would make the link. That is what happened. I think Ms. Ashton did the same thing.

Does that answer your question?

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James: Actually, no. I would still like you to withdraw that comment, because I feel that you have singled me out on this committee for referencing a bill that has been spoken about at this committee by other members. I think that is completely inappropriate from the chair, who is supposed to be neutral and unbiased.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I am indeed very neutral and unbiased, as you have seen since I became chair of the committee, in March of last year. I have always made sure each party is treated fairly on this committee. Therefore, I will not allow my credibility on such things to be called into question.

Ms. James, I am sorry, but I will not withdraw what I said. I explained myself and that is that. I am sorry.

Ms. Day now has the floor.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: I will ask a few short questions. I don't know how much time I have left.

Mr. McPhail stated that in-person training was very important to prevent harassment. Recommendation No. 10 focuses a lot on online training. We were told that 94% of people would be taking it.

I will ask you a few questions very quickly. How do you ensure this training is provided? How is it evaluated? Is the training different for regular, civilian, subordinate or management staff? What could happen if a person refused to take this training or did not complete it?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for the question.

The training is provided to all categories of employees. Everyone has to take this training. Regarding evaluation, I can tell you the following.

[*English*]

That's done according to the percentage of people who are taking it and succeeding at it, and the response we're getting from the members who are taking it.

We're talking about online training here, but I want to go back to the face-to-face training, the in-person training that is being left out of the equation, because we do, in that training, in our supervisors, our managers, and our executives, who are all going through these training processes for their new duties, all feature face-to-face, in-person training, discussions, and testing on leadership and on harassment as well. It's not to be left just to the computers and online training. There's an in-person component to it.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you. I am going to have to stop you there.

We have one last five-minute period for questions.

Ms. Truppe, you have the floor.

[*English*]

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Commissioner Paulson, for being here.

Earlier today, my colleague Madam Bateman was talking about the number of officers being trained to investigate harassment. Some are also being trained as harassment advisers. That's very important, because it shows that there are multiple ways of resolving an issue.

Could you describe the harassment advisers in a little more detail and provide an update for the timeline of integrating them into the workplace?

Commr Bob Paulson: Okay. Those are part of the respectful workplace initiatives that the COs are delivering province by province. I know that in British Columbia, which is perhaps what some people were referring to, there was discussion of 100 additional investigators being trained. Those are investigators who have substantive day jobs and who, over and above their police responsibilities, are being asked and trained to address the sort of harassment backlog, as it were, in British Columbia.

The harassment advisers are being brought into the workplace. Again, in some cases, these are full-time positions where the numbers of personnel support that, and in other cases these are part-time duties, additional duties in terms of their substantive duties. As we roll out the respectful workplace program division by division within the next few months—and I know that the timelines are in the action plan—we will be monitoring that and providing reports to folks on it.

● (1255)

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's great. Thank you.

Do you know how many have been trained so far? Is there a number?

Commr Bob Paulson: I'm sure there is, but I'm afraid I don't know it.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: That's okay.

We keep hearing that one of the major factors in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace is clear leadership. During the last meeting we had with the RCMP, they mentioned that you had begun the Every Employee Engaged initiative, I think in July, to emphasize key points on leadership and a respectful workplace. Can you update us on the status of that initiative?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you, Chair.

That initiative was to satisfy myself that every employee of the organization was having these issues put before them in such a way that the supervisor could be satisfied by looking into the whites of their eyes, making sure they're having that conversation, and getting feedback from them. That has gone on. I'm satisfied that this has taken place across the country.

My corps sergeant major is adopting a new role and prominence in the organization and is, with his warrant group, who are the sergeant majors across the force, taking on the follow-through of that initiative to make sure that new employees, as they come in, are sat down and met by supervisors. Specific issues relating to harassment, job performance, the mission, and a respectful workplace are all canvassed with them. That's going very well.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Have you noticed any changes in the supervisors or managers as a result of the discussions?

Commr Bob Paulson: As I've gone across the country and I've met with supervisors, I have noticed that they're stepping up a little bit. Some of them have some reservations and are looking forward to some of the changes that will come forward with Bill C-42, but I have noticed a renewed attentiveness to supervisory and managerial duties.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: My colleague across the way was talking about the mandatory online training and how 94% had taken this training. Have you noticed any effects from the training?

Commr Bob Paulson: There's just a broader awareness. I don't know that we needed the training to get the awareness of the issue; I think the issue is front and centre in every Canadian's mind. But yes, I have noticed an awareness of and a sensitivity to the issues of a respectful workplace and how prevention is key, including discussing the issues with supervisors, raising objections with supervisors, engaging with supervisors. That's coming.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Thanks.

Just out of curiosity, if 94% have had this training what happens to the other 6%? Is there a way to make sure the other 6% have it?

Commr Bob Paulson: As I said this morning, it's mandatory training, and I'm touting 94% as a success. It should be 100%. We're trying to close that loop. There are a number of reasons for that, and the reasons relate to our network and members getting online and some guys and gals just having to get to it from some more remote spots.

Mrs. Susan Truppe: Great. Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you. Thank you very much, Ms. Truppe.

This is the end of our meeting today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Paulson, for having appeared before our committee again. The points you raised will certainly be very helpful for our study.

Thank you to all of you and have a good afternoon.

(The meeting is adjourned)

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