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Chair

The Honourable Peter Kent

Standing Committee on National Defence

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC)): Colleagues, we will bring this meeting to order.

Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), we are considering the main estimates for 2015-16, including vote 1 under the Communications Security Establishment; vote 1 under the Military Grievances External Review Committee; vote 1 under the Military Police Complaints Commission; vote 1 under the Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner; and votes 1, 5, and 10 under National Defence. This was referred to the committee on Tuesday, February 24, 2015.

Appearing before us today, for the record, is the Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of National Defence, and the Honourable Julian Fantino, Associate Minister of National Defence. Also at the table and appearing as witnesses we have, from the Department of National Defence, John Forster, deputy minister; Lieutenant-General Guy Thibault, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff; Claude Rochette, assistant deputy minister, finance and corporate services; and Patrick Finn, assistant deputy minister, materiel.

From the Communications Security Establishment, we have Greta Bossenmaier, chief.

Joining us at the table a little later we will have, also from the Department of National Defence, Jaime W. Pitfield, assistant deputy minister, infrastructure and environment.

Welcome to all.

Minister Kenney, please give your opening remarks.

[Translation]

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thank you, colleagues. It's great to be back here with Minister Fantino and this distinguished panel.

I should just point out that the last time we saw ADM Finn, he was wearing a uniform as an admiral. He has since transformed into a civilian, but is still in service to DND. I want to thank him for his military service to Canada in our uniform.

Colleagues, it's a pleasure to be here to discuss the main estimates for the fiscal year we've just begun. As you know, we have made important, significant new investments in the capabilities of the

Canadian Armed Forces so that we can project Canada's values and interests around the world and defend Canadians here at home.

If approved, the funds I am seeking would raise National Defence's total spending authorities to \$18.9 billion for this fiscal year. These estimates demonstrate our long-standing commitment to the armed forces and the modernization and replacement of key platforms to enable them to continue to deliver excellence in operations. This is also reinforced by budget 2015, which raises the annual Defence escalator from 2% to 3%, beginning in fiscal year 2017. This will increase spending on Canada's military cumulatively by \$11.8 billion over the subsequent decade. This investment is critical to keeping Canadians safe, critical to defending our interests, and critical to working with our allies and partners in the pursuit of international peace.

Here's what the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries said about that budget: "Not only is the budget balanced, which is a good thing for Canadians, but it provides a range of initiatives that are important to Canada's national defence and national security, which is all about keeping...us safe."

• (1535)

[Translation]

Through the government's investments, the Canadian armed forces are making a meaningful contribution in a number of theatres around the world. I recently returned from a trip with the Prime Minister to visit the hard-working personnel currently deployed to Iraq and Kuwait as part of Operation Impact, where they are working closely with our allies to degrade the so-called Islamic State.

Frankly, it is remarkable, Mr. Chair. We talk about the division and geopolitical complexities in the Middle East all the time, but in the fight against Daesh, the so-called Islamic State, there is a coalition bringing together Arabs, Kurds, Muslims, Christians, Shia, Sunni and minorities such as the Yazidis and Assyrians. Almost all the countries and the peoples in the Middle East have come together to destroy this appalling threat to human dignity, human rights, the security of women and girls and, of course, Canada's security.

Coalition airstrikes are helping to degrade them. In northern Iraq, the Iraqi forces are gradually taking back ground east of Mosul. The Prime Minister and I saw this. A few months ago, we were at an observation station of the peshmerga, with the help of the Canadian special forces. This was a base, an observation point for Daesh, the Islamic State.

In central Iraq, in the west and everywhere, Daesh is losing territory. The Iraqis are reclaiming their own territories, partly because of the contribution of the Canadian Air Force and the assistance of the Canadian government.

We have personnel deployed in Central and Eastern Europe to demonstrate Canada's solidarity with our NATO allies against Vladimir Putin's aggressive policies.

We have military doctors, nurses, medics and support staff deployed to Sierra Leone to help fight the spread of Ebola.

We recently deployed the Disaster Assistance Response Team to Nepal, to provide humanitarian assistance following a devastating earthquake.

[English]

Mr. Chair, I'm happy to report that later this month, at the beginning of June, the Canadian Armed Forces will be deploying some 200 personnel to begin an important military training operation in Ukraine to assist our Ukrainian friends in being able to defend themselves and reduce casualties as they deal with Vladimir Putin's de-facto invasion of their country.

Mr. Chairman, the ability of the armed forces to contribute begins with a strong investment in defence.

In fiscal year 2005-06, National Defence spent \$14.6 billion. In Budget 2006, we committed to raise baseline defence spending by \$5.3 billion over five years, and that was incarnated in the 2008 Canada First defence strategy, which implemented the 2% annual defence escalator protecting the defence budget against inflation. It's the only department in the government that benefits from such a policy. And, most importantly, the baseline increase from the Canada First defence strategy has been used to acquire a whole new generation of equipment. It's been used to refit aging equipment and to modernize it, but also to acquire important new equipment. For example, the Royal Canadian Air Force now has a critically important strategic airlift capability. I just received in March our fifth C-17 Globemaster III.

Mr. Chairman, there was a time when if Canada wanted to respond to, let's say, to the tsunami in Southeast Asia in 2005, we had to go effectively begging from partners to lease a plane. I seem to recall we tried to send a C-130 across the Pacific and it had to turn back for repairs. That was the state of our ability to project ourselves abroad in case of emergency just a decade ago. But now, I was able to indicate to our military that we wanted to pre-deploy our humanitarian assistance and then the disaster assistance response team to help the people of Nepal, and within 36 hours we had Canadian troops on the ground with humanitarian equipment helping to save lives. That's why investments like this matter. There were five C-17 Globemasters, and in addition the very substantial new C-130J fleet that we have acquired for tactical airlift capabilities. All of these things by the way, including the two modernized Auroras that are now flying missions over Iraq, are aiding our military capability.

The refit and modernization of our Halifax-class frigates is fantastic. I invite members to visit some of our refitted frigates if they haven't done so. I was on the *HMCS Calgary* on Sunday last as part of Exercise Trident Fury. Really, we have world-class cutting

edge capabilities aboard these frigates now, and as well there's the refit and modernization of our Victorial class submarines. Of course, there's also the modernization of our LAVs, our light armoured vehicles. There's the new M777 howitzer artillery pieces.

In addition to all of the equipment that we've successfully acquired or refitted in the past few years, I'm happy to advise the committee that the government will be investing \$452 million to upgrade, replace, and modernize infrastructure on bases and wings across the country. I suspect that Minister Fantino has more to say about that.

All of this, Mr. Chair, is designed to maintain a flexible, capable military.

• (1540)

[Translation]

The main estimates were tabled in Parliament in February, and my department is seeking authority to spend \$18.9 billion in 2015-2016.

[English]

This figure represents an increase in spending authorities of \$280.5 million or 1.5% over the main estimates of last year.

I should point out that there were the mains, but as is usually the case, there was additional incremental spending in the supplementary estimates that totalled \$20.1 billion at the end of the year. I would anticipate that will happen this year as well.

Interestingly, Mr. Chair, this year operating expenses for DND will be 8% higher than last year, but we will be spending less on capital expenditure authorities by some \$700 million, primarily because equipment that we thought we would be taking possession of in this fiscal year, we either took early possession of or we believe we will be taking possession of in the next fiscal year. So there is always some margin for rescheduling the actual acquisition of equipment, and that changes the budget numbers on the capital side.

There is a slight reduction in grants and contributions of \$9 million, primarily because all of NATO's contributing countries are reducing their transfers to NATO.

I'll close, Mr. Chair, by saying that we are doing hugely important work around the world right now, in eastern and central Europe, in Iraq and Syria, in Nepal, in Sierra Leone, and I want to thank the men and women of the Canadian Forces for doing us all proud in that work. With this budget we believe they will have the resources they need to do what we ask of them.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Kenney.

Minister Fantino, your opening remarks, please.

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for the opportunity to address your committee alongside my colleague, Minister Kenney.

I would like to take a few minutes to discuss how the main estimates enable the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence to continue defending the sovereignty and security of Canada.

One of my responsibilities as associate minister of Arctic sovereignty, with the increased activity, commercial shipping, natural resources exploration, and even tourism in the north, along with Russian military activity, makes it ever more critical that National Defence has the right monitoring capabilities and the emergency response options to meet the many current and emerging challenges that we face.

Mr. Chair, last month I visited Operation Nunavut in Cambridge Bay and the Nunavut area to get a sense of how the military conducts northern operations. I also had the opportunity to visit the Joint Task Force North in Yellowknife, and the 1st Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, our eyes and ears in the Arctic.

Mr. Chair, our work in the north to ensure Canada's sovereignty is both impressive and, indeed, vital. Moreover it is critical that National Defence continue to have the right policies and resources in place to protect Canada's northern interests and enable the Canadian Armed Forces to fulfill its responsibilities in this regard.

Another major responsibility of my portfolio is information technology security and foreign signals intelligence, which serve to protect our national security and, of course, our interests. While this might be more abstract, its effects are unequivocally tangible and, indeed, critical. Continual exponential advances in communications technologies are transforming almost every aspect of our lives.

The Communications Security Establishment, CSE, has a vital role in protecting and defending federal government systems from malicious attacks each and every day. National Defence also plays a supporting role and has a great interest in protecting its systems against cyber threats, given the military's reliance on cyberspace to enable its operations, and as we have seen recently, cyberspace is increasingly a prime target for both terrorists and malicious cyber actors.

Mr. Chair, let me be clear. The Government of Canada networks are attacked millions of times every single day, and those numbers will certainly rise. The new reality of modern warfare is here. The digital battleground, as we have witnessed, ranges from recent ISIS cyber attacks to Russian cyber aggression against Ukraine.

Mr. Chair and members, these are just two areas where the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence work hand in hand every day to defend and protect Canadians and our interests. The main estimates are a critical part of ensuring that the necessary funding is in place to enable operations to continue.

I should note for your benefit that one noteworthy item from the main estimates is CSE seeing a year-over-year reduction of nearly \$301.6 million. This shrinkage is one time, an exceptional occurrence, as it is the result of payment of \$306.7 million for contract costs related to the construction of CSE's headquarters in the year prior.

With that, Mr. Chair and members, I will bring my remarks to a close and I would be happy to take your questions.

Thank you.

• (1545)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Fantino.

We will now begin the first round of questions, beginning with Mr. Chisu, for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Minister Kenney and Minister Fantino and team, for coming today to our committee.

Minister Kenney, you mentioned that in its 2015 budget the Canadian government indicated that it will be strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces by providing \$11.8 billion over 10 years, an increase to the annual escalator of National Defence's budget to 3% starting in 2017-18. I outline also that our government recently increased DND's annual escalator to 2%.

Minister, how does this escalator of 3% impact DND and the Canadian Armed Forces' long-term funding, and which programs will benefit from this additional funding? Can you provide an idea of how this additional funding will be spent and used?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Chisu.

Yes, as I mentioned, in 2008 the government formalized an annual 2% escalator for the DND budget. We've announced an increase in this year's budget to a 3% escalator, beginning in fiscal year 2017-18, which we estimate will represent an accumulative 10-year increment of \$11.7 billion, which is very considerable. You ask how this will be used. Well, it will be used on, of course, the basic operations, but any incremental funding will be reflected in the priorities of the military.

The most important thing here is that this represents long-term stable, predictable growth in funding. That's what our military commanders need for planning purposes. This also means that the defence budget will grow in real terms—that is to say, typically the consumer price index in Canada is at 2% or below, so this means real long-term, sustained growth.

I should mention that this is in addition to the accrual envelope that we have as a set-aside, a lockbox fund for capital procurement, which is in the range of \$107 billion over the horizon of 20 years, or two decades. Most of that \$107 billion over two decades has been committed, but some of it still is available. I believe that \$17 billion is not yet committed for future equipment that is identified as a priority for procurement.

•(1550)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much, Minister.

You mentioned Ukraine in your speech. That is very close to my heart, as I am from an area that I consider to be under threat in Eastern Europe.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine has been going on for about 16 months now. In your opinion, why is it so important that Canada, along with our NATO allies, establish a presence in the region and provide training to our Ukrainian allies?

I would like to mention also that one of the allies, Romania, welcomed Canadian CF-18s, and they were very pleased to conduct surveillance operations and help together with Canadian forces.

Hon. Jason Kenney: There are two dimensions to my answer, Mr. Chairman.

First, we think, given the aggressive posture of Vladimir Putin, it is critically important that NATO demonstrate a message of resolve and deterrence. The worst thing to send an aggressor like Vladimir Putin is a message of weakness and uncertainty, because that could lead to a miscalculation.

Mr. Putin has expressed, effectively, a new political strategic doctrine. It's hardly new for Russia, but he has rearticulated a traditional Russian doctrine that Russia has a right and responsibility to "protect" russophone minorities anywhere they live, and that includes Romania. That includes the Baltic States. That includes Poland and Hungary and, indeed, obviously Ukraine as well as other countries in eastern and central Europe. This was the pretext for his invasion of Georgia. It has been the pretext for his illegal annexation of the Crimean territory of Ukraine and his support for and de facto invasion of the Donbas region and the eastern oblasts of Ukraine.

So given the sizable russophone minority in other eastern European countries, most particularly the small Baltic States, we and our NATO allies feel it's essential that we send a message of unity and resolve, which is why we are supporting Operation Reassurance, in which Canada's CF-18s have flown Baltic air policing missions. I can report that the HMCS *Fredericton* has been in the Black Sea and will shortly be doing patrols in the Baltic Sea. We have sent 250 Canadian infantrymen who are now stationed on joint exercises in eastern Poland, and our air force assets were located for a while in Romania. All of this sends a message of resolve.

In addition to that, outside of the NATO context, we are demonstrating solidarity with Ukraine in defending its territorial integrity, which is why we have announced the deployment of some 200 military personnel to Ukraine to provide such things as explosive ordnance disposal training, improvised explosive device disposal training, military police training, medical training, flight safety training, and logistics system modernization training.

Most of this will occur in the extreme west of Ukraine between Lviv and the Polish border in a training camp established in part with the assistance of Canada and the United States in a place called Yavoriv. It's some 1,300 kilometres away from the actual conflict zone in eastern Ukraine. This in addition to the provisioning of non-kinetic equipment to Ukraine and our diplomatic, political, and trade

support such as the free trade negotiations, is all designed to send a message of resolve to support Ukrainian sovereignty.

•(1555)

The Chair: That's all your time, Mr. Chisu.

Mr. Harris, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you for joining us today.

I do wish to put on the record that your visit here is welcome but that the official opposition gets, I think, a total of 12 minutes of questions and answers to deal with this \$20 billion budget and all the responsibilities that go with it.

The Chair: I have a correction, Mr. Harris. The minister has agreed to be with us through the full two hours of this committee.

Mr. Jack Harris: Well, that was just announced when you just spoke.

Hon. Jason Kenney: On a point of order, if Mr. Harris would like, I would be happy to stay here for four hours.

Mr. Jack Harris: That would be fine too. We go by notices that we receive officially, and I thank you for your new official notice. As vice-chair, I think it would have been nice to know about it.

The Chair: We just learned of that opportunity before the meeting.

Mr. Jack Harris: I appreciate that, Mr. Minister. That's good to hear.

My first question is for your colleague Mr. Fantino. It's about something I also just heard. Did I hear correctly that you suggested that your title was associate minister for Arctic sovereignty? Is that a new title?

Hon. Julian Fantino: No, it's one of the responsibilities that has been put in my purview.

Mr. Jack Harris: So it's just one of your responsibilities, not part of your title?

Hon. Julian Fantino: No, it's not.

Mr. Jack Harris: I thought that's what I heard.

Mr. Kenney, first of all I appreciate your unequivocal answer today in the House regarding the establishment of a board independent of the military to look at sexual misconduct complaints. I do need to ask you, though, given that a directive was issued by the Chief of the Defence Staff on February 25 that General Whitecross' team should be prepared to, on order, transition to a permanent establishment in National Defence, reporting to the CDS, whether I should take it from your answer that the directive has been countermanded by you as minister.

Hon. Jason Kenney: No, that wouldn't be accurate. It would be accurate, however, to say that the directive to which you refer was issued in February, two months' prior to the military receiving Madam Justice Deschamps' report that was commissioned by the CDS. Having received and reviewed the report, the CDS and the Canadian Armed Forces have agreed with all 10 recommendations in principle and have tasked Major-General Christine Whitecross with a plan for their implementation, which includes an independent process for receiving and acting on complaints with respect to sexual aggression.

I would just point out to you that I think about an hour ago, the Chief of the Defence Staff issued a statement in this respect saying that the planning assumptions that were found in his initial directive two months ago should in no way be viewed as restrictions or orders for Major-General Whitecross to ignore the recommendations of the final report. Any such suggestion is quite simply false.

Chair, I'd be happy to table in both official languages General Lawson's statement.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Minister, this directive, of course, was issued after the CDS had a copy of the report or a draft of the final report, and was made with that in mind. The press conference that General Lawson had also included the suggestion that this was an interesting idea—the independent report—and that they were going to study these proposals. I'm just wondering, was it any action on your part that has given us the kind of unequivocal statement that you made in the House today that there will be an independent body? I say this because about a year ago the military did an internal study that gave the military a clean bill of health, in direct contrast, obviously, to what we see from Madame Deschamps.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Again, it was the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Lawson, who commissioned Madam Justice Deschamps to lead an independent investigation into concerns about sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. Rather than waiting for her final report, the CDS decided, on his own volition, to take the initiative, not to waste time, through the appointment of Major-General Whitecross with the task of beginning to develop a plan of action on this issue. And that plan of action, of course, will now be informed by the Deschamps report. I believe the CDS and Major-General Whitecross have both been very clear that they accept in principle all 10 recommendations.

But please, Mr. Chair, I think members have to be reasonable. It's not possible for a large organization to implement complicated recommendations on a hugely sensitive subject in a couple of weeks. Major-General Whitecross is working with her colleagues in the command on this with great haste, and I expect to see more specific plans for implementation in the near future.

• (1600)

Mr. Jack Harris: I take it from that that you played no role whatsoever in providing confidence in the public—

Hon. Jason Kenney: Military commanders have told me from the beginning that they accept all the recommendations in principle, so I didn't feel any reason to intervene in that regard.

Mr. Jack Harris: So you've not intervened at all.

One of the other questions that about the report was the concern that Madame Deschamps expressed about her mandate and the limitations on the scope of the report, which, of course, the military determined prior to engaging Madame Deschamps. The limitations relate to the military or criminal justice system, including any decision made to exercise discretion as to whether or not to investigate complaints, lay charges, proceed with charges, or prosecute charges, in other words, all of the actions and the conduct of military police and all of the actions that would involve a prosecution for sexual assault. Yet she indicates that the victims express concerns about how they would be treated by the military justice system, which has led to their not reporting sexual assaults. Many who did report said that their experience was atrocious. She heard that assaults that do not result in physical injury tend to be ignored and that charges are often not laid in these cases.

That seems to be a very fundamental problem for women in particular, but not exclusively in the military, where the justice system appears not to be responsive to the complaints and to the situations that occur.

Sir, given that the military has only had jurisdiction to prosecute sexual assaults since 1998, would you be prepared to undertake or ask for a review of the operation of the military justice system with respect to sexual assaults?

Hon. Jason Kenney: That item, as you just mentioned, Mr. Harris, was commented on by Madam Justice Deschamps in her report that is taken into consideration by the military in its response.

I would be happy to announce, Mr. Chair, that the government intends to bring forward amendments to the National Defence Act that would mirror in military law the victims bill of rights recently adopted by Parliament, and that would strengthen procedural rights for victims of sexual aggression in the Canadian military and other crimes. That, I believe, also will respond to the concerns raised by Mr. Harris.

The Chair: That's time, Mr. Harris.

Mr. Norlock, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you to the witnesses, thank you for being here today.

Minister Kenney, our government recently increased DND's escalator to 2%. In the coming years, that will increase to 3%. You've already indicated several areas in which this will impact DND and Canadian Forces long-term funding. I've always believed that politics are all local and that the people who pay their taxes that we're spending on our Canadian military need to know in practical terms what that means to the Canadian Armed Forces and to them.

You've mentioned, of course, that the budget keeps increasing—personnel, salaries, etc.—but what can they look forward to with these additional funds that they can be proud of in regard to what their government is doing for them?

Hon. Jason Kenney: It will certainly allow us to maintain the personnel structure of the Canadian Armed Forces at a steady state, which is approximately 68,000 personnel in the regular forces and I believe 27,000 on the reserve side. It will ensure that we're able to maintain and continue to modernize infrastructure on their bases as well as the equipment they use.

But really what it means, I think, for managers and commanders in the military and the department, is stable, long-term, predictable funding that they can plan on. That's really critical if you're a base commander.

I know that you've been a fantastic representative for CFB Trenton in this Parliament, Mr. Norlock, and if you're commanding CFB Trenton and the many different wings that are operating out of there, the many different squads and functions, you need to know that two or three years from now you're going to be able to rebuild that military house or restore that equipment.

This gives you some degree of confidence that the funds will be there. I think that's what it is. I think there's a release of pressure, if you will, to some extent, for managers and commanders in the system in knowing that they will have adequate resources. Look, we're not talking about increasing the military budget by orders of magnitude, because obviously we all have to be careful about the expenditure of tax dollars, but I think it gives them a level of confidence in that they can actually plan on a reasonable horizon to maintain kit and morale in the forces.

• (1605)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you for mentioning that. Having been in uniform for 30 years, I know how important it is to have the proper uniform and equipment to do your job.

When I asked about the practical implications, that development at CFB Trenton—which is currently in my riding and will be in the new Bay of Quinte riding—means more than just the \$800-million-plus that we've spent on infrastructure at the base. What it means to the community, Minister, as I think you've reminded me of in the past, is that payments in lieu of taxes go to that municipality so they can complete their infrastructure and the municipality doesn't have to raise taxes on the local people. Those kinds of investments at our bases, etc., have a multiplier effect.

My next question would be for Minister Fantino.

Thank you for being here, Minister. The main estimates show that there is an increase of \$16.1 million to the Communications Security Establishment to further support their mandate. Without getting into any details on specific operations, because I know there is confidentiality around that, can you explain why this is necessary to protect the interests of Canadians in this new day and age?

Hon. Julian Fantino: Thank you for that question.

Under its cybersecurity mandate, the CSC helps protect and secure Government of Canada and other important Canadian computer and information networks. CSC's role includes providing advice,

guidance, and services to government departments on a wide range of security issues.

There's definitely an exponential increase in the need to escalate that protection because of the advances in technology, obviously, and also because of the use that is made of it and the malicious cyber-actors who operate in this kind of world. Indeed, it also includes the risk and the threat of terrorism. It's about trying to keep pace with all of the issues we're facing and trying to do the best we can, as well as to get ahead of these threats. It's a relatively small amount compared to the value in return.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much, Minister.

Minister Kenney, another important element that we've been talking about, and it's substantive and once again relates to CFB Trenton and many other locations, is the Canadian Forces' search and rescue function. Can you comment on the current state of Canada's search and rescue equipment and any plans to replace and upgrade this equipment?

Hon. Jason Kenney: In fact, I think you and I had just had a conversation about that recently, Mr. Norlock.

I first of all want to acknowledge some innovative trials that have been conducted by the Canadian Armed Forces, particularly the RCAF wings that are responsible for search and rescue, SAR. There's an old model where they would have what was called a 30-minute response posture. Very typically that would be between sort of 9 to 5 Monday to Friday, but beginning two to three years ago at CFB Trenton, the RCAF SAR wings began, I would say, a more intelligent readiness posture where they would stand up more resources to the 30-minute response posture during times when they more frequently get calls of distress; for example, weekends in the summer as opposed to weekdays in the winter. Now we intend to make that a general policy across all of the three SAR wings in the RCAF.

In addition to that I'm pleased to inform the committee that the Department of National Defence and Public Works have just issued a request for proposals for fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft. This has been one of those frustrating procurement files for a number of reasons going back more than a decade, but I'm pleased to say that we will now be receiving proposals on a replacement for the Buffalo fixed-wing SAR aircraft. This will allow us to modernize our equipment.

Of course the new maritime helicopters that we'll begin receiving in fact next month in Shearwater will also enhance our air SAR response capability.

• (1610)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

Ms. Murray, please, for seven minutes.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The importance of the well-being of women and GBLTQ members of the military is utterly critical in a country like Canada, and it's been very distressing to find out how poorly the culture of the Canadian Armed Forces supports them. That's why I'm going to dig further into what's been going on with this Deschamps report. There's been a lot of confusion and dissimulation around this issue and silence from the minister effectively for two weeks, so I appreciate having the occasion to ask some questions.

The minister mentioned that the directive took place before the Deschamps report, but I'll just note that it was actually written on February 25 and the draft review report by Madame Deschamps was received on February 16. That's nine days that this was in hand, so I'd like to ask the minister, was he advised of this initiating directive?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, I have to correct two inaccuracies on the part of Ms. Murray. First of all, I have not been silent on this matter for two weeks. I've been speaking about and responding to questions in the House and media about sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces since the day I was appointed, including every time it's come up in the House or at my appearances at this committee.

Secondly, the CDS did not receive the report in February; he received a draft. Drafts are called drafts because they are subject to change, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Joyce Murray: That's what I just said, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Jason Kenney: So I would like to correct the member for seeking to mislead the committee on that point and point out that the CDS should be commended for not waiting for the final report to be issued.

Ms. Joyce Murray: I would appreciate, Mr. Chair—

Hon. Jason Kenney: He began to take measures to address this problem, including the appointment of Major-General Christine Whitecross, and has accepted all 10 recommendations in principle.

Ms. Joyce Murray: I would appreciate it if the minister would do me the courtesy of answering my questions. Was he advised of this directive for which there was a draft report, as I said, and did he sign off on it?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, the report was not commissioned by the minister; neither me nor my predecessor was commissioned—

Ms. Joyce Murray: I said the “directive”.

Was he advised of the directive, and did he sign off on it?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Before I was interrupted, Mr. Chair, I was saying that the report was commissioned by the Chief of the Defence Staff, not the minister—neither me, nor my predecessor.

Ms. Joyce Murray: That was not my question, Mr. Minister.

This directive—

The Chair: Let the minister answer the question.

Ms. Joyce Murray: I would like the clock to stop when this minister starts talking about things that are not related to my question.

The Chair: Let the minister answer the question.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Rick Norlock: What we do in committee is very similar to a court of law. You get to dictate the question; you don't get to dictate the answer.

The Chair: Minister Kenney, your answer, please.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chair, as I was saying, the report of Madame Justice Deschamps was commissioned by the Chief of the Defence staff, by the military, not by the minister—neither me nor my predecessor—and orders that are issued by the military are ordered by the military, not by the minister.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Thank you.

I want to also point out that while the Prime Minister in question period today said that this was a letter, it in fact does have the weight of an order. It was implied by the Prime Minister and the minister that this was two months ago and therefore that it was not germane.

I will bring to the minister's attention the April 30 action plan addressing the Deschamps report. It says on page 1 that the strategic response team on sexual misconduct—that's the team that would be an internal response—was stood up under the authority of the Chief of the Defence Staff's initiating directive of February 25. In fact, this report that was launched two weeks ago was based on the initiating directive, contrary to what both the minister and the Prime Minister said.

I would ask the minister, has he commanded or ordered the Chief of the Defence Staff to rescind this directive that is the basis of the minister's, the government's, response to the Deschamps report on sexual harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces?

• (1615)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chairman, has the clerk received and distributed the CDS statement?

The Chair: Yes, she has.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I think that answers all of Ms. Murray's questions.

The Chief of the Defence staff says that the “planning assumptions”—to which Ms. Murray refers—“should in no way be viewed as restrictions or orders for [Major-General Whitecross] to ignore the recommendations of the final report. Any such suggestion is quite simply false.”

Mr. Chairman, I hope that the member is not impugning the integrity of the Chief of the Defence Staff.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Well, I will bring to the minister's attention the fact that the Chief of the Defence Staff's statement that was just circulated continues to use the words “accept in principle”, and uses as an example the kind of research that he will doing, the U.S. model, which includes accountability staying within the U.S. armed forces. So he is referring exactly to the concern that we have, and it is not clear.

I am trying to clear up the confusion, and I have to say that the minister has just extended it. I will ask another set of questions around the budget.

Minister, in the budget you announced this escalator of 3% as long-term, stable, predictable funding. That would be comical if it wasn't so disappointing and disrespectful of the Canadian Armed Forces, given what happened to the last supposed stable predictable escalator of 2%. In fact, there's been over \$5 billion of cuts to that announced funding, and there's been over \$10 billion in clawbacks.

Even if we ignore that fact, this announcement of a 3% annual escalator will further reduce the department's share of annual GDP to 0.89%, the lowest level since the 1930s.

I would like to ask the minister how he reconciles this with his government's commitments to NATO allies to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP, when his plan further decreases it? Even if he were to implement it, his last escalator lasted for two years and then became a de-escalator.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Well, Mr. Chair, I regret to inform the committee that virtually every one of Ms. Murray's statements were false or misleading.

First of all, it was not the Chief of the Defence Staff who referred to the United States as a model to implement. Rather, he said that:

There has been much discussion on the issue of Madame Deschamps' recommendation to establish a 'Centre of Accountability'.... Her report suggested that we examine models for this such as those used by the militaries of Australia, France or the United States.

Indeed it was Madame Deschamps' report which evoked—

Ms. Joyce Murray: No, excuse me, it's in the statement by the Chief of Defence Staff.

The Chair: Order.

Your time has expired, Ms. Murray.

Ms. Joyce Murray: That's simply false.

Hon. Jason Kenney: We should look to the United States as a potential model. Mr. Chair, with respect to spending. In point of fact, under the previous Liberal government defence spending's share of GDP reached a low of 0.9% after massive cuts. Between 1993 and 2005, the previous Liberal government did not procure or even attempt to procure—with the exception of the failed maritime helicopter procurement—a single major piece of military equipment, Mr. Chair, and that's what we are trying to correct.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Can the minister table that 0.9% figure?

The Chair: Ms. Murray, your time has expired.

Thank you.

We now move into the second round of questions.

Mr. Williamson, please, for five minutes.

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and ministers, it's good to see you and your colleagues here today.

Turning to an investment, Minister Kenney, could you talk a little about the shipbuilding procurement plan on the east coast? In your opening remarks you mentioned that the Royal Canadian Navy is

undergoing a significant fleet modernization. I'd like to hear how this large project is proceeding. You can comment on the impact that these modernization projects and the national shipbuilding program are having on the industry on the west and east coasts.

• (1620)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Williamson, as you know this is the largest peacetime shipbuilding program in the history of the Canadian military, with some \$36 billion committed through our accrual budget to acquire a new fleet of very modern service combatant ships to replace our Halifax-class frigates, as well as the Arctic offshore patrol ships, the new joint supply ships, and other vessels. I'm pleased to say we're moving forward on all fronts. I understand that Irving shipyard in Halifax is getting close to being prepared to cut steel later this year on the hulls for the Arctic offshore patrol ships, so we'll see tangible progress.

I think some people would ask, "Why can't we get all these ships right away?" There's a reason for that. When you're dealing with a procurement this large, you want to stage it intelligently over time so you don't end up ramping up a huge capacity in the shipbuilding industry just to see it crash back down. We want to spread this out intelligently over time, manage the costs, and maintain the capability. The plan is that as soon as the AOPs—our Arctic offshore patrol ships—are finished out of the Irving shipyard, the yards will then be able to move forward to begin production of the new service combatant vessels. In the meantime out in the Seaspan Shipyards in Vancouver, we're working closely with that shipyard on the icebreakers. With the supply ships, which are scheduled to come on line in 2019, we and Public Works are working very closely with the vendors. I hope that answers your question.

Mr. John Williamson: Thank you.

I'm just curious, after hearing Ms. Murray's remarks, how you square the comments that we hear from the Liberal opposition about their time in office versus our time now when we have the shipbuilding strategy, as well as the five C-17s, which are able to airlift men and women around the world on a moment's notice—as we saw recently with Nepal, and before that in the Philippines, and before that in Tahiti in a crisis—and these record investments? Is this the result of making the right decisions? What's going on that we're able to do this at a time of broad budget restraint throughout the Government of Canada? We're seeing these investments being made, and as you've said we've tabled a balanced budget this year going forward.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I think we have to put this in perspective. Most of our major allies like the United Kingdom and the United States, for example, and even France, are absorbing deep cuts to their military budgets. To be clear, they started with larger militaries because of their traditional roles in this respect, but the United States is looking at a sequestration of upwards of \$40 billion out of its defence budget in this fiscal year. The United Kingdom has seen enormous cuts to their military budget, while in Canada we've been going in the other direction. That's simply because we prioritized this at a time of economic uncertainty and fiscal restraint. I think it reflects the fact that this government has made defence a priority. Now it's true, Mr. Chair, that supporters of the military would love to see increases in resources by orders of magnitude, but I think they're realistic in understanding scarce resources, and that relatively speaking the military budget has been maintained or increased slightly as a share of overall government spending since 2006.

Mr. John Williamson: Do I have 30 seconds?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. John Williamson: Actually, I have a small pitch to make for future planning. When I was first elected there was a program for members of Parliament where, over the course of the summer, they could go out for a week with either the air force, the army, or the navy. As a result of the budget restraints, that program was done away with. I would encourage you to consider reinstating that in the years ahead, now that we're moving forward.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Which program? The MP—

• (1625)

Mr. John Williamson: Yes, I did not participate in it my first summer and after that it was done away with. I have heard from others who have spoken about it. As a member of this committee, I would like that opportunity. It's something that I would encourage you and your officials to consider, going forward.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Are you suggesting that I should do basic training, Mr. Williamson?

Some voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Williamson, that's your time.

[Translation]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Simply to remind you, if you have questions for Minister Fantino he will be leaving at the bottom of the hour, at 4:30.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Unfortunately, the minister does not spark my interest today.

Mr. Kenney and Mr. Fantino, thank you for your presentations. I appreciate the information you have provided to the committee, but I would have liked to have the written documents before you read them. It would have been easier to follow along.

I too would like to go back to the whole issue of the Deschamps report and General Lawson's directives. My family has a long military tradition and, when I see things like that, I honestly find it

troubling. I have read the Chief of the Defence Staff's statement, which you have circulated, and I heard you say that it should not be viewed as restrictive orders. However, I think that sends a rather negative message on the intentions of the office of the Chief of the Defence Staff.

The Canadian armed forces are having problems with recruitment right now, especially in the primary reserve, whose personnel is well below the 27,000 members it should have. Under those circumstances, do you really think it will be possible to reach the recruitment targets? Actually, we cannot even assure the men and women who proudly serve in the Canadian Forces that they will be safe in their workplace and that they will have access to the necessary resources to take action if they are going through difficult situations.

How can we tell the parents of these men and women that we will be taking good care of their children when they are putting their lives on the line to protect Canada? This troubles me. Could you comment on that?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I thank the member. Her question is important.

Mr. Chair, I think we all agree that the military needs to take action against sexual assault, which is completely unacceptable. I would say that this is why the Chief of the Defence Staff asked Justice Deschamps to prepare an entirely independent report. In my view, this also explains why Major-General Christine Whitecross has been appointed to implement the recommendations in the report and to address this issue.

Let's be clear, Mr. Chair. Having talked to the Chief of the Defence Staff and the Canadian military commanders, I know that they recognize that there is a problem and that they must take action. That is the reason behind the report. They agree with all the recommendations made by Justice Deschamps.

Ms. Éline Michaud: If I may, Mr. Minister, I am going to interrupt you, because I have very little time.

You are saying that the armed forces seem to be willing to implement Justice Deschamps' recommendations, and I am going to hope that this is actually the case.

Could you tell us where the funding will come from to implement all the recommendations in this report?

Hon. Jason Kenney: The funding will come from the Canadian Forces budget. The military has not submitted an additional request for funding in that sense.

Ms. Éline Michaud: Thank you.

In the investigation led by Justice Deschamps, this whole issue of how the military justice system works was completely excluded from her mandate. However, this issue has been raised on many occasions by people who, unfortunately, were victims of sexual assault or harassment within the armed forces.

Will you consider the possibility of giving directives to the office of the Chief of the Defence Staff to expand the investigation and address this specific aspect of the issue?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes. As I told your colleague Mr. Harris, the government intends to put forward a bill with amendments to the National Defence Act in order to increase protection and the rights of victims of crime, including sexual assault in the military. Changes will therefore be made to the military justice system in order to strengthen the rights and interests of victims.

• (1630)

Ms. Éline Michaud: Could you tell us when we can expect to see this bill introduced in the House? I think this is quite a pressing matter.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, it will be soon. The structure of military law is quite complex. The department has been working on this issue for over a year, but I am almost ready to introduce a bill in that sense.

Ms. Éline Michaud: So could we expect to see it in the next few weeks?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Éline Michaud: That's great.

[English]

The Chair: Colleagues, we will suspend for 30 seconds to allow Minister Fantino to make his exit.

Thank you, colleagues, we will resume now.

Just a note, we have been joined at the table by Jaime Pitfield, assistant deputy minister of infrastructure and environment at National Defence.

Continuing with questions, Mr. Richards, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Thank you.

I'd like to focus on what is, without a doubt in my mind, our most valuable military asset, the brave men and women in uniform who serve and protect our country. I'd like to ask, in the context of escalating budgets and the fact that you've spoken about that already, if there are any plans to adjust the pay received by the men and women in uniform?

An hon. member: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jason Kenney: Vice-Chief Thibault.

Lieutenant-General Guy R. Thibault (Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence): Mr. Chairman, I'm all for pay increases for the military, for the record.

Voices: Oh, oh!

LGen Guy R. Thibault: Certainly, Canadian Forces pay and benefits are mapped in respect to what is going on in the public sector. Perhaps the CFO might be able to talk a little bit about what's going on on that side.

Colonel Claude Rochette (Assistant Deputy Minister, Finance and Corporate Services, Department of National Defence): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As the Vice-Chief mentioned, this is how it works normally. The Canadian Forces have a compensation and benefits team that works very closely with Treasury Board Secretariat personnel. Once they

have a collective agreement, they do comparisons between civilians and the military to determine the pay rate for the military. Since the negotiations for the public service collective agreement are still ongoing, we won't see a pay raise for a little while.

Mr. Blake Richards: Okay.

In that same line, are there any plans to adjust the number of personnel? What can you say about the numbers of personnel currently in the forces? What are the plans going forward?

Hon. Jason Kenney: The plan since 2011, I believe, has been to maintain 68,000 regular force members and 27,000 reservists.

Mr. Chairman, we're just a wee bit under that. I think we're at 65,900 currently.

By the way, I don't know if you've noticed, but the government is frequently criticized for advertising. One of the largest elements of government advertising is Canadian Armed Forces recruitment. If you haven't seen the latest ads, I recommend that you, because they're fantastic. This is important, and of course this is not an innovation. The Department of National Defence always uses advertising for recruitment purposes. So we do need to catch up a little bit on recruitment here to maintain a steady state.

As you know, in your home province of Alberta, for example, with very high-paying jobs, a lot of the people in the military with skills in particular trades have been attracted by much higher salaries in the private sector, so perhaps there's been a somewhat higher level of attrition than has historically been the case because of labour market inflation. I think that perhaps the cooling in the energy industry may help us retain some of those folks.

• (1635)

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you. I certainly agree with you in regard to those ads. They are very powerful ads, and it's unfortunate to hear the opposition criticize those kinds of initiatives.

I want to ask you a little bit about the measures that are in place for serving members, whether deployed in theatre or on a base here in Canada, in terms of access to mental health care. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about the current measures in place.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, thanks. There have been very significant improvements in recent years in mental health supports for members of the Canadian Armed Forces. As you know, I think there's just a lot more awareness and, frankly, more science and detection of diagnoses about mental illness in society generally, but also in the military. I'm pleased to say that we provide mental health care through 19 primary care clinics in 16 detachments based across Canada and Europe. We've increased the number of mental health professionals, which includes clinicians and support staff. We currently have 400 full-time mental health workers and are hiring more. For comparison, there were only 229 mental health professionals in the armed forces back in 2000, so it's a substantial increase.

Canadian forces health services also meet the demand for services through a variety of mechanisms including contracting mental health care practitioners and referring military members to mental health professionals in their local community. In 2012 we announced \$11.5 million in funding for mental health services, bringing the total of mental health investment to \$50 million for that fiscal year, which included hiring a psychiatrist, a psychologist, mental health nurses, social workers, addictions counsellors, etc.

I've seen some of this good work myself at CFB Petawawa, for example, Garrison Petawawa. I've seen the strong support that's being provided. Now, we can always try to do more, but I think the situation's improved considerably.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you, and time's up.

Mr. Harris for five minutes, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Minister, I appreciate your announcement that you have new legislation planned with respect to victims' rights. We do know, of course, that the military was excluded from the Victims Bill of Rights, which is a glaring omission. So I'm pleased that there will be an opportunity to have some proposals and an opportunity to debate the effectiveness of military justice when it comes to prosecution, particularly of sexual assault cases. I look forward to that. I know these are very late days in this particular session of Parliament, so I don't expect that to happen before we rise. Are you committed to tabling that legislation before we rise?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I don't have a date, but it's the intention of the government to table legislation in this regard. Let's sit down and talk about it. Who knows? Perhaps if we could find a magic moment of consensus we could move it quickly.

Mr. Jack Harris: The last point on Madame Deschamps' report is that I have a motion before this committee to invite you as well as Madame Deschamps and the Chief of the Defence Staff to come to our committee. Would you be willing to do that to talk further about the report and its implementation?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I'd be happy to come to committee whenever the committee invites me, Mr. Chairman, whenever I'm in Ottawa. Sometimes I have urgent business elsewhere, but in principle, yes.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you. I hope that we'll be able to deal with that motion later today.

To move to another point, again and again I'm finding, regarding services that are expected to be provided to the military and military families, that there seems to be glaring gaps occurring. I want to refer you to two that come to mind as a result of recent information and recent reports.

The first one is the fact that the universal child care benefit doesn't appear to be universal when it comes to military families. I have here a letter addressed to a military family living and serving in the United States saying that the universal child care benefit that had been given is not available to that family because they're living outside of the country. The letter demands that \$3,600 going back to 2012 be repaid. I wonder, how is it that these things occur and is this

something that you can actually fix? This certainly seems to be problematic.

The other one is the case of Major Marcus Brauer. The government has now twice refused to pay his \$88,000 home equity assistance loss that occurred when he was forced to move from the Edmonton base to Halifax, despite his having won a grievance through the grievance procedure and having the Chief of the Defence Staff at that time supporting his grievance but being unable to pay it out. Now, that seems to me to be in direct contradiction to the notion that people who serve in the military should be entitled to get the benefits that a policy suggests they should receive. Secondly, in the case of Major Brauer, the grievance procedure that we have in place doesn't seem to provide an effective remedy when a monetary payment is required, because the Chief of the Defence Staff doesn't have the authority to actually order a monetary payment.

These two things are glaring. Major Brauer has been fighting this for five years now. This case of the universal child care benefit seems another example of our military members not receiving what they should receive in government benefits.

• (1640)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Harris. On the first point, I'd be happy to look into that. Of course, many social benefits administered by both the federal and provincial governments apply only to residents for taxation purposes. But I will certainly look into that and commit to get back to you.

On the second matter, I'm not familiar with that case. Perhaps the Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff could respond.

LGen Guy R. Thibault: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the issue that's been referred to, Major Brauer's case, one of the dimensions of the Canadian Forces that we see is the frequent moves of members of the Canadian Armed Forces. In those kinds of circumstances, finding the appropriate locations for your home is always one of our biggest challenges, and to find the right place for your children to go to school. In those moves what happens, of course, is that inevitably, over time, individuals who buy into market will find that they may not be able to sell their homes when they're being posted.

So within the protection that we have for members of the Canadian Armed Forces is a protection to offer them, in the case where they may not be able to recoup their full cost, provisions to allow a member to recoup some of that which would be involved with their overall situation in a particular sale of a home.

We can never tell somebody where they're going to buy a house or what kind of house to buy.

Mr. Jack Harris: Vice-Chief, he won his grievance procedure. The Chief of the Defence Staff has the final say, and he said yes, you should be entitled to receive your full loss of home equity.

LGen Guy R. Thibault: In this particular case, if I may, the point would basically be that he's gone through the grievance procedure. He still has measures that are available to him in terms of judicial review, which is his entitlement to do, and ultimately, at this point, I would just say that the compensations and benefits we provide for members of the Canadian Armed Forces are, I think, recognized very widely as being of a very high standard. We have a very good overall compensation and benefits package for members of the forces. Ultimately, when you come to each individual circumstance, you're never going to satisfy a hundred per cent of the people a hundred per cent of the time.

The Chair: Time is up, Mr. Harris.

We've hit the point in the rotation with two Conservative slots. Mr. Bezan will take both.

Mr. Bezan, for 10 minutes, please.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the minister and all the members from the defence team for being here today to help us go through the main estimates.

Yesterday, Minister, I had the opportunity to meet with the provost marshal along with representatives from Ukraine, from their military police. Of course, as you know, we are leading the subcommittee on the joint commission with the Ukraine and the United States and United Kingdom on training, as you mentioned earlier, Ukrainian military members.

The military police one is an interesting leadership role that we're taking amongst our coalition partners, but can you speak in general terms, and also to the specifics, on why it's important that Canada is participating in and standing with our Ukrainian friends and on the work we're doing with NATO in Operation Reassurance?

• (1645)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Bezan. I know this is an issue very close to your heart.

I understand we had a delegation of the Ukrainian military police in Ottawa yesterday here to learn, and, indeed, one of the specific requests that Ukraine has made of Canada in terms of capacity building is in the area of military police.

The Ukrainian military, as you know, has sadly been subject to many of their capabilities being degraded over time thanks in part to bad leadership at the political level. The previous president ended up ensuring that friends of his ended up receiving large chunks of the military budget as opposed to the actual military. This has really atrophied many of their capabilities, including in the area of military police.

But also I understand the Ukrainian troops have been incurring disproportionately high levels of fatalities as a result of combat casualties in combatting Russian and Russian-backed troops in the Donbas region, so we believe the medical first aid and medevac training that we will provide will help to reduce casualties by increasing their ability to provide critical first aid.

Similarly, the flight safety training will be very helpful to Ukrainian forces in reducing casualties, as will the training with

respect to the detection and disposal of improvised explosive devices.

But the core of our training operation, which will occur in Yavoriv, in Galicia, in western Ukraine, will be general combat training that will start with units from the Ukrainian National Guard and eventually will move to units from the Ukrainian army. We'll be doing this together with the United States.

One last point. Shortly after I became minister, I announced Canada would begin providing radar satellite imagery that we obtain to Ukraine so they can better detect strategic movements across their border with Russia. This was something that President Poroshenko specifically asked of Canada when he visited us here last September. We believe that, and the non-kinetic equipment we have delivered tons of—I think you were involved personally in some of that—have been extremely well received. In fact, I've spoken to Ukrainians who say the Canadian winter gear, for example, was the most popular item available in the Ukrainian army. They gave it a nickname. They called it *Kanadki*. Apparently this has really helped to raise the profile of Canada-Ukraine, which I think is a wonderful expression of solidarity.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

NATO reassurance. We are of course participating in both. We have done air policing, we've done a number of land exercises, and the HMCS *Fredericton* is over there right now.

Can you speak to what we're doing with NATO in bolstering our presence and participation with allies in the face of this Russian aggression?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Thank you.

Yes, Mr. Chairman, we have committed assets to NATO's Operation Reassurance since last summer, including currently the deployment of some 250 army personnel situated in Poland. They have been doing joint exercises and training in the Baltic states, in Poland and elsewhere. A number of those soldiers currently come from Garrison Petawawa.

In addition, of course, I mentioned the Baltic air policing rotation led by four Royal Canadian Air Force CF-18 Hornets last autumn, as well as the deployment of the naval asset, the HMCS *Fredericton*, in the Black Sea. They have also been on joint exercises with other NATO countries, and I understand they will be deployed to the Baltic Sea in the near future.

In addition to all of these things, there will be some very large-scale NATO joint training exercises this summer to which we will be contributing an estimated 1,000 military personnel. That's not formally part of Operation Reassurance, but it sends the same message: a message of strength, coordination, and determination in the alliance; a message we know Mr. Putin is hearing.

In fact, when the HMCS *Fredericton* was last in the Black Sea, Russian military aircraft flew around it and over it to demonstrate they recognized our presence in the Black Sea. As far as I'm concerned, the message is being sent that Canada is there and we are part of the alliance.

•(1650)

Mr. James Bezan: To continue, I want to talk a little bit about Operation Impact, the role we are playing there with the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Army using special operations forces members in Iraq, and the expansion and extension of the mission to Syria. Of course, all this is included in the main estimates. I was wondering if you could speak to the importance of our participating with coalition partners in defeating the Daesh, this terrorist jihadist [*Inaudible—Editor*].

Hon. Jason Kenney: To date, for fiscal year 2014-15, I believe we estimated \$122.6-million in incremental funding for the Canadian Armed Forces Operation Impact in Iraq. As you know, the government has decided, and the House of Commons has endorsed the decision, to extend that operation for one year and to expand the RCAF air sorties into eastern Syria. In the budget, we estimate that the cost of this extension in the current fiscal year will be \$360 million, which includes a 20% contingency. The largest portion of those costs is associated with munitions and aviation fuel for the six CF-18 Hornets, the two modernized RCAF Aurora surveillance aircraft, and the Polaris refuelling aircraft, which has helped to deliver tons of aviation fuel to coalition aircraft.

As you know, last week the Prime Minister and I visited the RCAF stationed in Kuwait, and we were extraordinarily impressed by the professionalism. In fact, I went out on the tarmac and saw our Hornets. I was told by our general there that, just two days prior, Canadian CF-18 pilots had led coalition aircraft from six different countries in a mission that struck, I believe, 49 targets in 19 minutes with no apparent collateral damage. That was Canadians leading that mission. Also, apparently we have been contributing in very significant ways in unpacking intelligence that we are getting from various sources, including aerial surveillance, to help with coalition targeting. I would point out that, in the last three or four days, we have seen an increased tempo in CF-18 sorties successfully hitting targets of the so-called Islamic State, demonstrating that we are continuing to make a difference there.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

I just have—

The Chair: Very briefly.

Mr. James Bezan: —a really brief question.

I appreciate that we've been getting all these technical briefings from National Defence, from you, and from the commanders who are leading the Canadian Forces. Can you talk a bit about the progress we have made since we've been there, not just from a Canadian standpoint but from the entire coalition, in the fight against ISIS?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chairman, last September the so-called Islamic State was gaining new territory every day, new villages, towns, and cities, including Mosul, the second largest in Iraq; claiming new victims; committing genocide against the religious minorities of Iraq, the Yazidis, the Assyrian Christians, and others; and committing some 8,000 Yazidi women alone to horrific sexual slavery and human trafficking. Left unchecked, there is no doubt that ISIL would now be in control of much of Iraq, in addition to its territory in Syria.

This is strategically relevant to Canada because as long as that death cult was growing in perceived size, strength, territory, and pseudo-sovereignty, it was confirming the whole narrative of this so-called caliphate. The growth of that organization was, in other words, a magnet for radicalization and recruitment, including from countries like Canada. Every Canadian who goes and joins Daesh represents a potential security threat to us here at home, as do the radicalized individuals unable to leave this country, such as the two individuals who committed attacks last October. That is why it has been so critically important to move Daesh from the offence to the defence, from gaining territory to losing territory. This effectively proves that this is not a caliphate; it's just a band of genocidal hoodlums, and this helps to reduce the seductive power of it to recruit and radicalize.

•(1655)

The Chair: That's time, Mr. Bezan.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, you have the floor for five minutes.

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Lieutenant General Thibault, I would like to quickly go back to the case of Major Brauer, which my colleague Mr. Harris mentioned, because I don't quite understand the answer you gave him.

Major Brauer won his grievance and he shouldn't have had to take additional action. He won and he received the support of the Chief of the Defence Staff. Now you are saying that he still has other options for remedies. I don't understand why Major Brauer still needs to fight when he won his grievance. He should not have to take further action or appeal to other authorities. I don't understand why he should still have to fight to obtain the compensation promised to him through this favourable decision.

LGen Guy R. Thibault: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to clarify my answer.

First, I would like to make it clear that our grievance system is not the problem. We are in the process of reviewing the grievances submitted by the members of the Canadian armed forces. In the grievance you are referring to, the Chief of the Defence Staff gave the proper response.

After reviewing the grievance, the Government of Canada confirmed, through the Federal Court, that this situation needed to be addressed specifically. The review was done. In this case, it was the Government of Canada's Treasury Board that did the review. The conclusion was that the market was not depressed where Mr. Brauer's house was. That's all. It was simply a confirmation that there was no basis for reviewing Mr. Brauer's situation. Mr. Brauer made the decision to sell his house and move with his family from Edmonton to Halifax. He now has the possibility of requesting a judicial review.

Ms. Éloise Michaud: This conclusion was revoked by the Federal Court, which reviewed the decision and concluded that this is not the approach that should have been taken. The situation is still quite problematic. My understanding is that the situation is currently in the hands of the government, not in the hands of the Chief of the Defence Staff.

LGen Guy R. Thibault: The Treasury Board responded that it needed to conduct an independent review of the situation. That is what it did and this is the outcome.

Ms. Éloise Michaud: Since my time is limited, I will quickly move to another issue.

Recently, a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer was published on the fiscal sustainability of Canada's National Defence program. The conclusion of the report reads as follows:

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) estimates that the current force structure of the Department of National Defence (DND) is unsustainable at current funding levels. To achieve sustainability, it will be necessary to change the force structure, increase the amount of funding allocated to DND, or implement a combination of the two.

The government expenditure plan for next year provides for a reduction of over \$700 million in the National Defence budget. How can the Minister expect the Canadian Forces to continue their activities and to properly safeguard Canadian security when they are faced with such a reduction in the budget?

I heard you say earlier that the National Defence budget will be increased, but that will start only in a number of years. In the meantime, how will the Canadian Forces be able to survive—if I may say so—this rather significant reduction in funds?

Hon. Jason Kenney: That is a good question, Mr. Chair.

The report from the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer does not take into account the automatic increase, the 3% escalator, because it had been set well before the budget was announced. This increase represents almost an additional \$12 billion for the Canadian Forces.

I will ask Mr. Rochette to answer in greater detail.

• (1700)

Ms. Éloise Michaud: You are talking about the 3% escalator—I'm not sure what the equivalent term is in French—but that will start in 2017-2018. Until the 3% increase is in effect, what will the Canadian Forces do as their budget is cut?

Hon. Jason Kenney: The report from the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer provides forecasts for 10 years, but it does not factor in the automatic 3% increase and the long-term increase of almost \$12 billion.

Colonel Rochette, could you elaborate on the issue?

Col Claude Rochette: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Actually, the study is based on a parametric cost analysis. In short, it is a baseline study of the costs without having the information.

In terms of the study done in this case, the office of the—

Ms. Éloise Michaud: It is the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

If I may, I would like to add that the office would have benefited from better communication with the Department of National Defence in order to have accurate information.

Col Claude Rochette: We see that the Parliamentary Budget Officer did a baseline study by looking at other countries and costs. It factored in an inflation cost per year.

In fact, if you take a close look at the report, you will see that, for the years 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997, it calculated the expenditures by adding an increase for inflation. It compared the current structure of the Canadian armed forces to the one that was in place in 1994. In so doing, it concluded that the funding was not sufficient. However, if it had concluded that the structure of the forces was similar to 1997, it would have drawn a completely different conclusion, meaning that the funding was sufficient.

Another problem is that something else was overlooked.

The minister talked about the cost of the 2% budget increase. In fact, in 2017-2018, it will go up by 1%, but there has been a 2% increase since 2008 already. That is already in effect, but it was not factored in.

In addition, the administration and managerial decisions have not been taken into account. We often look at the budget available and try to eliminate the less important activities and reinvest in our priorities. In fact, we are now reviewing our activities. However, that is not taken into account. When that happens, we can—

The Chair: Thank you.

[*English*]

The time is up.

Mr. Chisu, please, five minutes.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to ask questions.

As a serving military member, and now a veteran, for me the commemoration of military milestones is very important, and I think also to all Canadians.

In the report on plans and priorities for 2015-2016, the DND outlines that it will:

...continue to commemorate significant events in Canada's history and times of conflict such as the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. We will also plan for future commemorations including the 75th anniversary of the Dieppe Raid and the centennials of the Battles of the Somme and Beaumont-Hamel, Vimy Ridge and Passchendaele.

What is the budget that DND and the Canadian Armed Forces are planning to spend on these and other commemorative events? Could you explain some details of how this money will be spent and what exactly will be the role that DND and the Canadian Armed Forces will be playing in planning and implementing these commemorative events?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Chairman, I agree that these commemorative exercises are hugely important. I just came from the 70th anniversary commemorations of the liberation of Holland, where I saw tens of thousands of grateful Dutch citizens of all ages and generations waving the Canadian flag and celebrating our country.

Last week I was at the large Nazi transit camp out of which 100,000 Dutch Jews were shipped to places like Auschwitz, and saw Dutch Holocaust survivors thanking a Canadian vet who liberated them from that camp. These are incredibly important teaching moments and, I think, they inspire young people to pursue military service. I think these things matter to recruitment in and morale of our current forces. It's not just about nostalgia; it's actually about the morale of our current forces.

The cost altogether that we are setting aside for these commemorative exercises is \$4 million for the last fiscal year and \$3 million for this fiscal year, but I believe that Veterans Affairs Canada will also be contributing separately to these items.

• (1705)

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Thank you very much.

Also in the report on plans and priorities for 2015-2016, you mentioned that National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces will implement the vision of the renewed Canada First defence strategy that builds on the success of the first CFDS published in 2008, while adapting to a new security environment.

Could you explain some details of this? I would appreciate it very much because, as a serving military—

Hon. Jason Kenney: Are you still in the reserves, sir?

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: No, not anymore. I'm too old for that, Minister, but I appreciate it. I enjoyed every minute of service to the country through the Canadian Armed Forces.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Thank you for your service, Mr. Chisu.

Yes, as you know, in 2008 the government published the Canada First defence strategy, which has been the road map for our capital investments in new equipment and kit for the military, but also the points of strategic emphasis.

Of course, any time you develop a military strategy, it will be affected by unexpected developments. For example, you've already asked me a couple of times about Canada's response as a NATO member to Vladimir Putin's increasing aggression. I don't think we saw that to this extent in 2008. In any event, that's why we believe there is a need to renew the Canada First defence strategy. We will be doing so in due course. If you have ideas that you would like to feed into that, I'd be quite happy to sit down with you and take those ideas on board.

I don't have a date, though; I'm sorry.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: You mentioned a new vision in terms of unexpected events. I'm thinking about the Arctic and looking at the Russians, who have had massive exercises in the Arctic rebuilding their bases in the Arctic, and—

The Chair: Briefly, please.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I would just point out that the CFDS I think was the first published Canadian strategic plan for our military, which did very clearly emphasize the importance of a military presence in the Arctic to protect our sovereignty. One practical way in which we are demonstrating that will be the refuelling station in Nanisivik and of course the AOPS vessels, which will be the first part of our national shipbuilding strategy to come on stream.

The Chair: That's time, Mr. Chisu.

Ms. Murray, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Thank you.

I have four questions, but first I want comment on something the minister said, that supporters of the military would like to see more money, and that's not always possible.

What I would say is that supporters of the military would like to see honesty, and that's been scarce.

For the record, I'll mention the articles of J.L. Granatstein and Roland Paris of the Centre for International Policy Studies on defence spending as a percentage of GDP, which is now lower than at any time during the previous Liberal government years, and in fact lower than it's been since the 1930s.

If the minister has backup for his 0.9% of GDP figure, I would appreciate it if he would table that.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I'd be happy to table it, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Thank you.

Hon. Jason Kenney: [*Inaudible—Editor*]...Granatstein op-eds about the Liberal defence record.

Ms. Joyce Murray: I'm going to talk a bit about military equipment, which is so critical to the safety and well-being of our armed forces members—their ability to train, to be part of operations, and not having aged equipment parked for very expensive maintenance. Unfortunately, the 2008 CFDS, Canada's failed defence strategy, has been a road map to nowhere in terms of equipment for the last number of years.

I just want to note that since the 2007-08 capital budget, the average amount announced as a vote 5 expenditure but not spent—in other words, clawed back—has been \$7.2 billion. That is money that Parliament approved but was not spent. That's an average of 23% clawed back. I will just note in comparison that for the 30 years prior to that, the average vote 5 funds left unspent was 2%. That's 23% versus 2%. I would hate to think that this government deliberately failed to provide our troops with the equipment they need, sacrificing them to pay for election tax breaks. Whether it's destroyers, patrol ships, resupply ships, icebreakers, close-combat vehicles, armoured patrol vehicles, drones, CF-18s, or Buffalo and Hercules search and rescue aircraft, most of the major procurement projects have been bungled and not actually delivered.

Minister, which of those replacement programs will actually be initiated this year? That's my first question.

My second question relates to something the minister previously claimed, that the capital equipment budget was reduced by \$700 million and that some of that reduction was because the Canadian Armed Forces took early delivery of equipment previously, leading to a reduced need for capital spending.

What equipment was delivered early that would account for your statement?

• (1710)

The Chair: You have a minute and a half left, Ms. Murray.

Ms. Joyce Murray: The third question is, of the 400 procurement experts whose jobs were cut during the deficit reduction action plan, does the minister plan to build any of these back? Analysts suggest that that's a big bottleneck to actually replacing equipment.

Fourthly, I would like to ask Ms. Bossenmaier how the one third of 1% of the CSE budget allocated to the commissioner's budget compares with the oversight and review functions of our Five Eyes partners? The commissioner's budget is one third of 1% of CSE's budget. Is there a concern that it will limit the commissioner's effectiveness in providing oversight? How does it compare with our Five Eyes partners?

The Chair: You have 30 seconds to divide among you.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jason Kenney: Okay. That's very effective questioning, Mr. Chair.

The member suggested that there has been no equipment obtained, except she forgets the five C-17 Globemasters, the 17 C-130J Hercules tactical aircraft, the 15 CH-147F Chinook helicopters, the modernization of the Hornets, the modernization of the Auroras, the modernization and refit of the Halifax-class frigates, the commencement of the largest shipbuilding program in peacetime history, the upgrades to the light armoured vehicles, the new fleet of tanks, armoured personnel carriers, and precision guided artillery, etc. Compared to the Liberal procurement from 1993 to 2005, a list of which I have right here, Mr. Chairman....

Her leader refers to our CF-18 modernized Hornets as "aging warplanes". I can tell you that's not how ISIL feels about them right now, Mr. Chairman.

I will say that if the member wants yet again—I know that she has been on this committee for a while—a detailed explanation about how capital spending moves from one year to another based on a number of factors, I'm sure that ADM Finn or other officials would be happy to provide that to her.

None of this is, as she characterizes it, clawed back. She must know by now that that is simply a false assertion. None of it is clawed back. To the contrary, central agencies—Treasury Board and so forth—have thankfully given to the Department of National Defence the ability to profile into future years moneys for the accrual budget that are not actually expended. Would the member have us instead lose the money in a given year if we're not prepared to accept equipment because it's not yet ready? You know, when you're

dealing with \$110 billion, *grosso modo*, in the accrual budget over 20 years, it's not all going to be spent in exactly the years that you planned. There are going to be some changes in terms of timing. The member, I think, should....

I'll leave it to Ms. Bossenmaier to respond if she has the time, Mr. Chair.

• (1715)

The Chair: Again, it is a dangling question, so, Ms. Bossenmaier, a brief answer, please, if you will.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier (Chief, Communications Security Establishment): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I don't have the specific data with me on the percentage of the various budgets of the various other organizations and how they attribute that. I can just talk about how we do have an independent commissioner who is focused on the review of all of CSE's activities.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, Chair.

That's a novel way of increasing your time.

Mr. Kenney, you were just asked about the PBO report and its conclusion that the programs were not sustainable with the current amount of money. I know there was an analysis of that, but that's not the only external group that has looked at this.

The recent Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute report by Mr. David Perry suggests, using a similar kind of conclusion reached, that there was a hole in the budget and the forward plans, and that even with the \$11.8 billion over 10 years that has been promised starting in 2018, there will be "a sizable fiscal hole" requiring "an adjustment to the current defence plan" by revising the plan "either by increasing funding in the short term or downgrading its expectations" for the future.

Both of these reports indicate that there's a looming problem.

First of all, why has any increase to try to deal with it been put off until 2017-18? Also, are you anticipating the need for decreasing what we expect from our military, or an actual need for greater funds in order to continue with the programs we have?

Hon. Jason Kenney: I have a couple of points, Mr. Chairman.

First of all to the good question, we have not put off increases in the defence budget until 2017. The budget will continue to benefit from the 2% automatic escalator between now and then. It will continue to benefit from the accrual budget that is set aside, which itself has benefited from the roughly \$5 billion Canada First defence strategy baseline increase, which has resulted in the successful acquisition and upgrading of this equipment that I just listed.

Moreover, the PBO report, as mentioned, does not take into account even the 2% escalator, let alone the additional 1% for the full 3% escalator. As Mr. Rochette mentioned, we always have the ability to reallocate resources to where they will be spent most effectively, so that is what we are doing currently in the defence renewal strategy where we are seeking to reallocate roughly \$1 billion in spending from low priority to high priority areas—to use the vernacular, from tail to tooth. Those are factors not taken into account by the PBO, or indeed I believe by Mr. Perry.

We believe we can continue to operate one of the highest quality, medium-sized, multi-platform militaries in the world with the kind of reference levels that are presented in budget 2015.

Mr. Jack Harris: Thank you, sir.

One of the problems, though, is that the 2% escalator that's been in place was never met because of the changes that were made to the budget, the recalculations, the contribution to decreasing the deficit, and the freezes that were put in place. That escalator hasn't actually worked now, and there's no indication that it will work in the future.

Mr. Chairman, since I only have another couple of minutes left and I may not get another round, I would like to move:

That the Standing Committee on National Defence invite the Minister of National Defence, the Chief of Defence Staff, and retired Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps as witnesses to appear before the Committee to answer questions about Justice Deschamps' external investigation of sexual misconduct in the military, and the Canadian Armed Forces' response thereto, for two hours, as soon as possible.

That's my motion, sir, and I know we have the consent of the minister to participate in this meeting.

The Chair: It would seem to be a formality, given that the minister has already agreed, but do we have agreement here?

Mr. James Bezan: On a point of order, I'd like to see the motion first before we vote on it. Can we continue on with the questioning while that's being circulated, and we'll come back to it?

• (1720)

The Chair: Absolutely, and we'll take the vote.

We will get your motion addressed by the end of this meeting.

You have 45 seconds remaining in your questions, if you choose to use it.

Mr. Jack Harris: I have just a quick question to Madam Bossenmaier, now that we have her here. I note that the budget for CSEC seems to have been decreased substantially this year over last. Under the estimates related to the signals intelligence program there's a reduction of around \$110 million and about \$90 million in the IT security program.

Does that have anything to do with the buildings, or are these program reductions based on something else?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

As the minister noted in his opening remarks, the decrease in the CSE budget for this year is related to the one-time delivery cost, if I could call it that, of the new facility.

The Chair: That's time, Mr. Harris.

Our final questions are from Mr. Norlock.

You have five minutes, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

Mr. Minister, in previous questioning my Liberal friend across the way failed to mention a \$600 million cheque written by the then Liberal government for the cancellation of the EH-101s, which we now have to buy at about two or three...and you can comment on the real cost of that. Today translated—I am told by military personnel who are now retired, because they don't speak when they're not retired—that would equate to over \$1 billion in today's dollars, well in excess....

Of course, one of the great purchases by the previous government for a buck was some submarines that at a great cost now are of benefit to our navy. I wonder if you could comment on how much it cost to refurbish those?

In regard to improvements to the LAVs, the previous Liberal member in my riding talked to my Rotary club about this great deal for us that we know had no safety components, and of course we now have improved LAVs and I know that our government improved their capabilities because of the experience in Afghanistan.

I think one of the benefits to our soldiers was the use of the Chinooks in Afghanistan so they wouldn't have to drive over roads peppered with IEDs. We had to buy back or borrow Chinook helicopters from the Dutch, I believe, that still had Canadian markings on. Now we have of course ordered Chinooks.

All politics are local. At CFB Trenton I was present when the then leader of the opposition, along with Mr. O'Connor, who was your predecessor as Minister of Defence, talked about our strategic and tactical lift, which means a lot to the people of Trenton because to facilitate those two abilities of our air force, we had to begin a huge capital project—and not only at CFB Trenton.

So I wonder if you might like to comment on some of the issues that I have brought up?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Yes, Mr. Chair, of course I agree.

What Ms. Murray depicts is not the reality that I encounter when I visit our bases and see the pride of our Canadian Armed Forces personnel in presenting, and talking about, and demonstrating their new equipment.

Just to give you one example, in CFB Trenton, your base, it's one thing to buy the C-17s, and not just four of them, but now a fifth one.... That fifth one, by the way, now means that we'll be able to have three of them operational 90% of the time, meaning that we can respond to multiple crises concurrently rather than getting in queue.

There was a deliberate policy decision of the previous Liberal government, a deliberate decision, not to have strategic airlift. I don't know why. Is it because they didn't actually want to have to say yes when urgent situations arose?

But not only did we acquire four, we acquired a fifth so we can actually have a strong appropriate maintenance rotation cycle. We didn't just acquire the planes. As you know we built an enormous hangar, two cutting edge maintenance hangars, for the C-17s at CFB Trenton.

Just look at the simulation equipment for training our pilots that we've now installed at CFB Trenton. These are very expensive systems that, by the way, are expensive up front but efficient in the long run because it's more efficient to train pilots on simulators than burning aviation fuel.

Wherever I go, whether it's visiting HMCS *Chicoutimi*, the modernized and refitted *Victoria*-class submarine in Esquimalt, or HMCS *Calgary*, or see at Garrison Petawawa the incredibly sophisticated new howitzer artillery pieces they have, everywhere I go I see new kit, highly motivated personnel, and a military that appreciates the fact that the Government of Canada is actually willing to use our military assets appropriately and prudently to protect our security, collective peace, and respond to humanitarian disasters.

I just ask people to compare our ability to respond the Nepalese earthquake versus the gong show of the government response to the tsunami in southeast Asia in 2005. The difference is investments in equipment. Of course, the personnel have always been professional but now they can actually get to where they need to go.

• (1725)

The Chair: That's your time, Mr. Norlock.

On behalf of the committee, Minister Kenney, I'd like to thank you, your officials, and General Thibault for your attendance here this afternoon. As you gather your possessions and papers, the committee will see to our duty of addressing the votes under the main estimates 2015-16.

COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$503,831,701

(Vote 1 agreed to)

MILITARY GRIEVANCES EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$6,143,503

(Vote 1 agreed to)

MILITARY POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$5,158,208

(Vote 1 agreed to)

OFFICE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT
COMMISSIONER
Vote 1—Program expenditures.....\$1,850,071

(Vote 1 agreed to)

NATIONAL DEFENCE
Vote 1—Operating expenditures.....\$13,483,693,376
Vote 5—Capital expenditures.....\$4,020,883,722
Vote 10—The grants listed in the Estimates and contributions.....\$168,742,820

(Votes 1, 5, and 10 agreed to)

The Chair: In conclusion, shall the chair report vote 1 under Communications Security Establishment; vote 1 under Military Grievances External Review Committee; vote 1 under Military Police Complaints Commission; vote 1 under Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner; and votes 1, 5, and 10 under National Defence to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

Again, to the point order—

Mr. Jack Harris: I'd like to note for the record that the New Democrats on the committee voted in favour of these votes, in case someone tries to say or suggest we never vote in favour of military expenditures, or we vote against all of the things for our soldiers, and all the usual kind of propaganda we hear in the House—

The Chair: It will be so officially noted.

Thank you, Mr. Harris.

Point of order, Mr. Norlock.

Mr. Rick Norlock: I'd like to say thank you to the member who just made that point of order. This is a rare occasion when the NDP does decide to vote our way.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

Now to the matter of Mr. Harris's motion.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: I'd like to make an amendment to the motion that we should add to the list, after the retired Supreme Court Justice, Major-General Christine Whitecross, since she's the leader of the strategic response team on sexual violence in the military, and we need to have her listed—

The Chair: Agreed.

Mr. Jack Harris: Agreed, sir. There's no need to have a separate vote on the amendment. We accept the amendment.

The Chair: Agreed. All in favour of the motion?

Mr. James Bezan: I'll just say one final note before we vote. As the minister already said, his time is limited, so we'll have to work around that as best we can.

The Chair: Absolutely.

Mr. Jack Harris: I think he has to be in the country.

The Chair: That meeting will be negotiated on the minister's availability, and you will be so notified.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you, all, for today.

This meeting is adjourned.

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