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• (1610)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. I see a quorum.

We are 45 minutes late starting. It's not exactly military time, so I apologize to the assembled generals.

We are going to get squeezed at both ends because we're anticipating a vote. The bells will probably start ringing in about an hour from now. I am seeking from members unanimous consent to possibly continue for a further 15 minutes during the half-hour bells so that we don't abuse our witnesses' time any more than we absolutely have to.

Do I have your consent to carry on 15 minutes after the bells ring?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you, General Allen, General Carignan, General Bourgon and General Brodie for your assistance in this study. This has been a study on recruitment and retention. I know that each one of you has a lot of insights to share with the committee.

As I understand it, General Allen will lead with an opening statement, and we'll get into questions shortly thereafter.

With that, I will ask General Allen for her opening statement.

Lieutenant-General Frances J. Allen (Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for inviting me to be here today to discuss some of the challenges that are facing the Canadian Armed Forces as it pertains to recruitment and retention and our plans to address them.

The CDS would very much have liked to have been here today; however, he was called out of the country to work with allies on collaborative efforts related to Ukraine.

[Translation]

The past couple of years have been tough for the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

We have been working hard to transform our institutional culture to make sure that everybody who wears the uniform has a workplace where they feel psychologically safe, valued and free to be

their authentic selves and to contribute to the very best of their abilities.

This has been taking place in the context of a global security environment that is more volatile and more dangerous than it has been in generations. The current war in Ukraine is front of mind for us, but it's only the most visible manifestation of a struggle that is ongoing between liberal democracies and autocracies around the globe, and it's been simmering for some time.

Meanwhile, extremism, cultural conflict and polarization are challenges to our democratic institutions.

Climate change and related natural disasters are driving instability and threatening people and property everywhere, including here at home in Canada.

In fact, domestic operations in this regard have become a major draw on the CAF's operational capacity, to the point at which our capacity for other core missions is affected.

• (1615)

[Translation]

We've always been ready and able to augment civilian disaster responses, but in recent years this has taken up an exponentially larger amount of bandwidth.

To be clear, between 2014 and 2019, the CAF devoted exponentially more personnel and days to domestic responses compared to the previous five-year period.

[English]

Canada needs a strong armed forces now as much as ever, and we are committed to always being there for Canadians, but intense competition in the private sector for Canada's best and brightest, particularly in many of the skills trades, and pandemic restrictions driven by necessary but constraining public health directives have combined to impact our recruiting efforts.

The flip side of the recruiting coin, of course, is retention. An important part of retention is what we call the quality of service of our members' experience. This includes working in a place characterized by respect and camaraderie, with modern infrastructure and leading-edge equipment, and having purpose, including meaningful deployment opportunities around the globe.

CAF members also face the same life challenges as every other Canadian, which are, in many cases, exacerbated by the unique nature of our work.

[Translation]

We all know the cost of living is soaring. Finding affordable housing is challenging. And CAF members are called upon to pick up stakes and move across the country on a regular basis. This is difficult for them, for their spouses and partners, and for their children, who have to leave schools and friends. And when we're trying to convince talented young Canadians to consider a career in the Canadian Forces, this upheaval is obviously not a selling point.

[English]

Addressing this is a priority for the CAF, and it's a personal priority for the CDS.

We have launched an ambitious program of reconstitution, a program that's laying the foundation for the CAF into the future. The first line of effort in this, our first priority, is our people—making sure a career in the CAF appeals to every Canadian.

The world is more dangerous now than it has been for a long time, and our nation is increasingly under threat. Canada needs its armed forces more than ever and ensuring we have a viable and relevant military is a national imperative.

It's incumbent upon all of us, including the duly elected representatives at all levels from coast to coast, to help make sure Canadians know about the opportunities that exist for a career in the CAF. We can't do this alone.

We're rebuilding the CAF to be better, stronger and more focused on the future—more diverse, more resilient, more inclusive and more relevant to Canadians.

I will stop here, Mr. Chair, with my comments. We all look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, General Allen.

Ms. Gallant, you have six minutes, please.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you to all the generals for your service to Canada.

Royal Military College provides a fully subsidized undergraduate program for officer cadets. Would you say that RMC is critical to recruiting and educating commissioned officers?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I'll talk briefly about it and then I'll turn this over to the chief of military personnel.

Certainly, the Royal Military College is one avenue for creating the officers the Canadian Armed Forces needs. It does produce and provide degreed officers into the Canadian Forces, but there are also other avenues. For example, I'm a regular officer training program officer, but I did my education at a civilian university rather than a military college.

I can turn the floor over to General Bourgon, who can perhaps speak to the broader numbers associated with officer intake.

• (1620)

Major-General Lise Bourgon (Acting Chief of Military Personnel, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence): Thank you. It's a very good question.

When you look at the two entry programs with the Royal Military College, the one in Saint-Jean and the one in Kingston, their strength is the four pillars. You have, of course, the university degree. You have the bilingualism. Officer cadets have to graduate with a level in their secondary language. You also have the physical fitness aspect and the professional development.

On the education and the professional development, when they graduate as officers in the Canadian Armed Forces, they're a little more rounded. However, other officer cadets, once they graduate from civilian university, catch up to the military college; it takes a bit longer. There is a true strength behind the four pillars of the Royal Military College degree program.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, General.

How many suicides occurred at RMC last year?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I don't have that number. I could ask General Bourgon if she has that at her fingertips.

MGen Lise Bourgon: I believe there was only one last year, but I would have to confirm that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

I was told there were three confirmed since September of last year, with one attempted.

There seems to be a real push to refrain from providing any type of counselling to the students who are remaining there. Would that be conducive to keeping cadets in the program, for them to continue on and be a part of the recruitment and successfully become a full member of the Canadian Forces?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Certainly, I think one of the elements that we take quite seriously, from I would say any traumatic event that takes place, is trying to provide resources available—be they members of RMC or on deployments and operations when there are significant incidents that take place—to allow people to have the opportunity to be able to reflect, seek support and discuss what they may be feeling and how they may be reacting to events that take place around them.

There are programs that are available at RMC. Perhaps General Bourgon can speak to that.

MGen Lise Bourgon: Thank you.

Indeed, just in the last two years, they have created a very interesting program. It's called resilience plus. It's a program looking at new officer cadets developing the resilience talent on how they deal with adversity, counselling, and mentorship and support. They meet regularly to develop those skills and to try to learn...because when you go through a military college, you have to remember that the selection process is difficult. Those officer cadets have succeeded all the way through their education, and they—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

Could you tell me what number of reported sexual assaults occurred at RMC this year, especially given that we have implemented a number of steps to ensure that reporting is done?

The reason I'm so concerned about this is that I'm told—and was originally told this back in 2015—that there's not a single female who graduates from RMC without being raped.

I would like to know what the number was for 2021.

LGen Frances J. Allen: Mr. Chair, to release our statistics, we would have to get back to you. We don't have them at our fingertips. We certainly do know about reported numbers, but I unfortunately do not have them available at this time.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you. I will look forward to seeing the reporting of those numbers, both for suicides as well as sexual assault and rape, coming to the committee.

Thank you very much on behalf of all of the cadets who are currently attending.

Another important aspect of retention is keeping the troops who are in Canadian Forces housing in livable conditions. I'm told that people who report that there's a problem, and they happen not to be home or are called on short notice somewhere, and the work doesn't get done and they call back, can be charged with a violation by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency.

Is that type of practice actually in place?

• (1625)

The Chair: That is an important question, but, unfortunately, Ms. Gallant has left no time for its answer, so you could possibly work it into a response to another question.

Mr. Spengemann, you are next, for six minutes, please.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Chair, thank you very much, and a very warm welcome to our senior leadership team of the Canadian Forces.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses for their service to our nation.

I would like to start with a proposition, which is that the nature of warfare and conflict have changed fundamentally. Wars are different; they are more internally focused, and so are displacements. Cyber-technology has become much more important. There may have been, as a result of that, or there may be at the moment, a convergence of the skill sets between the private sector and the Canadian Forces.

I wonder if I can get a quick reaction on whether that's a fair statement—whether that's a trend you're discerning—that because of the changing nature of what the Canadian Forces do, there is greater competition for those skills.

LGen Frances J. Allen: I would agree that we are in competition with Canadian industry, Canadian business, for the talented Canadians who exist. I would say that the changing nature of warfare certainly requires us to be producing and creating and training people on different skill sets than we might have 40 years ago. That's because of the nature of the technological advancements, as well as I would say the change and focus on information operations

and the cyber domain, the space domain. Those are all areas where I would say previously they were not traditionally focused on as military skill sets.

Certainly space, cybersecurity and information are elements that contribute to global society at large, and so there is a skill set there.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thanks very much, Lieutenant-General Allen. That's really helpful.

To the extent that's true, that poses a problem, because you're competing for talent in the private sector and you need to build talent pipelines inside the Canadian Forces, but it also creates an opportunity with respect to the transferability of skills whenever somebody who served in the Canadian Forces chooses to return to the private sector, or potentially even re-enters.

Is that a fair statement?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Yes, I would absolutely agree with that statement, Mr. Chair. It's one of the fundamental principles of what we've seen with reserve service. Reservists come and work part-time in the CAF, but bring with them all of the skills and talents they have in their civilian lives and their civilian jobs.

Beyond that, I think there are opportunities for us, even in full-time service, to be working with industry and other entities in a more collaborative way and, perhaps, in a way to transfer skills more to advance the elements we are working on.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: That transferability of skills, be it in cyber, high tech or the medical and life sciences, would be not only a key factor in recruitment, but potentially also a factor in retention. As someone goes through a career in the Canadian Forces and becomes more senior and skilled, they would have greater marketability upon their exit and return to the private sector.

LGen Frances J. Allen: I would agree.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: How flexible do you think the Canadian Forces are at the moment with respect to returning to the private sector, perhaps mid-career and potentially as a re-entry into the Canadian Forces at a later career stage? This is an out-of-the-box question.

Is the traversing of the civilian/military line, picking up skills on either side of the fence and then bringing them to the benefit of the other organization something that could be more developed?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Mr. Chair, I agree they could be more developed.

As I said, in the reserve force, we get that benefit by having people who have the skill sets that they've acquired. On the regular force side, we've often considered concepts of internships where you can go to a more skilled or cyber environment, do an internship and come back. It probably wouldn't be leaving the Canadian Armed Forces, but opening our eyes to how we can leverage the common areas that we have between ourselves and industry.

• (1630)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you very much for that.

I wanted to use the rest of my time—I think I have just under two minutes—on a question around improving recruitment from under-represented groups. The Canadian Forces is working hard to become more inclusive. There are, in my proposition to you, under-represented groups for whom the very consideration of serving in the Canadian Armed Forces may not be an easy one, because of their past exposure to conflicts and other armed forces, potentially in a negative way.

What does the Canadian Forces need to do today to present itself as a highly marketable and highly desirable place of work to trades that don't necessarily fall into the outward-facing, point-of-the-spear, combat-related roles? There is a whole plethora of trades that are potentially not known to members of those groups that you're trying to encourage to join.

What's the challenge there?

LGen Frances J. Allen: It is a great question and it's a great capture of the environment.

What I'll do is ask General Brodie, who is looking at our recruitment, to speak about the types of initiatives and programs that they're looking at.

Brigadier-General Krista Brodie (Commander, Military Personnel Generation Group, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence): First and foremost, we need to build awareness. As part of our comprehensive effort to optimize the CAF onboarding experience—including both recruiting and the early entry and onboarding training experience—we need to be able to build awareness and to create relationships and connections with those communities that can help us connect to the people who represent the talent that we require.

Our primary target audience is Canadians in that 18 to 34 age group. Leveraging that secondary target audience are the influencers and intermediaries. They are people who, within community networks, within family networks and culturally and racially diverse communities, can help us to connect with the talent that we are seeking to meet the operational requirements of today and tomorrow.

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, welcome to the committee.

You have six minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Thank you for your welcome, Mr. Chair.

I would also like to welcome the witnesses and thank them for all the work they do in the Canadian Armed Forces.

My question is for LGen Allen.

LGen Allen, I'd like to talk about personnel retention. You said that Canada needs a strong armed forces, given the challenges they face, and you're right. That strength is the men and women in the forces.

Given the recruitment and retention challenges, how do you attack—pardon the expression—the issue of work-life balance, which is important not just for women who enlist, but also for men, now?

You've already talked about housing and transfers, which are causing problems for members and their families. If action was taken now to try to correct this problem, wouldn't it have a significant leverage effect?

[*English*]

LGen Frances J. Allen: Absolutely, it is completely at both the front end and in retention throughout the life of a career that we have to be looking at the challenges members are facing and how we can ensure that the policies and the things we have the capacity to change and influence can make people more able to deal with the demands that exist. It is a demanding career to be in the military, but we don't need to make it more difficult for people by having barriers or, I would say, perhaps not even being aware of what those challenges are for individuals at the start of their career, at the middle of their career and towards the end of their career.

With respect to attracting people, we need to make people understand the variety and opportunities that can exist for men and women, for anybody who is interested, but then also recognize the barriers people face at various points in their lives, and how we can ensure that we are flexible enough to try to provide options for what sometimes are quite temporal or time-bound challenges that people face.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you.

Are you currently working on breaking down barriers that you've already identified? Retention is a major problem. You say that the private sector sometimes attracts the best candidates.

There is certainly a problem related to the conditions of practice and the competitive working conditions that favour the private sector. It can also be cumbersome. For example, are transfers essential in a career path or shouldn't they be reduced?

Are there already possible solutions to overcome the obstacles?

[*English*]

LGen Frances J. Allen: Yes, certainly there are initiatives under way. We are taking a look at what the impacts are on families. A life that requires you to move from place to place can make things challenging for families, so the establishment of family services and support for families as they move is one of those elements going forward.

The introduction of, I would say, consideration around people's religious needs and the diversity of the religious environments they come from and making sure we can try to accommodate the needs for spiritual leave is important. Again, it's trying to make it not appear that those elements of service that exist are barriers for who they are as individuals.

I can turn to General Bourgon as well, who has been implementing some of the policy changes in place. Maybe she can provide you with some more detailed examples.

[*Translation*]

MGen Lise Bourgon: Thank you for your excellent question.

We have an excellent initiative under way. It's called "Seamless Canada". The Canadian Armed Forces are working with all the provinces and territories on three issues, three themes: support for families in terms of spousal employment opportunities, education for children and the medical aspect.

As you said, the balance between work and family is extremely important. These three working groups focus on access to child care during the day and on school. We are trying to develop these few measures with the provinces and territories. These measures have a great effect on the ground to help with retention.

Almost half of our military members have children or dependants. We know that access to child care is difficult. Through the seamless Canada initiative, we're trying to work with the provinces to increase capacity on our bases. National Defence is also making efforts. Our mandate doesn't currently specify that we have to provide child care, except for—

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you; we appreciate it. We're going to have to leave it there.

Madame Mathysen, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today and for your service, of course.

One of the things that came up this week was a report on extremism and racism in the military. As we've talked about inclusion and trying to recruit, trying to attract people into the military, that plays a huge role in terms of how they look at their careers, how they will be treated, and of course, for women in particular, sexual misconduct within the military. I know that's on the minds of so many women currently serving and women looking to get into the military.

One of the key points in that report said that, over 20 years, 250 recommendations have been brought forward to the government, and they haven't been acted on. It said to turn to Deschamps and to Fish.

In terms of your perspective—and I know we've spoken about this through Status of Women in our report—the CFNIS was alerted to this as a big problem in terms of the chain of command and keeping that within the chain of command in terms of security for women. It was about a year ago that we were hearing that.

I would like to know now what changes have occurred since then so that we can just stop talking about reports and reporting on reports and so that we can see action in place.

• (1640)

LGen Frances J. Allen: For those of you who have seen the announcement—I think it was on Monday by the Minister—we are very appreciative of the work that was done by the minister's advisory panel on anti-racism for pointing out what I would say are the

factors, the realities, from both the people with lived experiences and the people they heard who said, "You have the information available. You need to act." That is certainly what we need to be doing.

The experience of what we hear from our people, from our advisory groups, who are there to help us identify the specific elements as well as the many recommendations that have come before that is where we have to go forward. We have already undertaken a number of those initiatives, moving forward to address some of those aspects ahead of us.

I would say that it is a challenge that we cannot shy away from, and we have many reports. The reality is that we need to make sure that the activities and how we're addressing the various recommendations that we have result in a cohesive outcome. Sometimes the recommendations can be variations on other recommendations in different reports, and we need to pull those together for the outcome we're looking for and the best way forward.

Some of the very simple things like exit interviews, mentoring programs and focusing on a character-based approach to selection of individuals are items already now under way within the Canadian Armed Forces, and we absolutely think that the work the panel did was wonderful to be highlighting this to us again.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Those examples are good to hear, for sure, but my specific question was about the issue with CFNIS. I know there were even contradictions between the major general who was leaving, saying that CFNIS wasn't part of the command structure, and yet it still was. This became an issue in terms of the investigation with General Vance.

Could you specifically talk about the recommendations that Deschamps and Justice Fish pointed out in terms of that and how those changes are being made?

LGen Frances J. Allen: The CFNIS, as part of an element within the military police group, is independent of the chain of command where they are working. They have a separate chain of command from the NIS themselves through to the MP group headquarters.

I will acknowledge that the provost marshal does fall under me as the vice chief of the defence staff for administrative purposes to make sure that they are building programs that are necessary, that they have adequate funding and that they're focusing, but I don't have a role to play inside specific police investigations. That is the independence that exists.

Justice Fish's report certainly identified that there is a desire to perhaps create a greater perception of independence by having the provost marshal be an appointee outside of the chain of command. We are examining that as part of the Fish report recommendations.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Is there a timeline on when we can hear about where you are on those recommendations, and on that Justice Fish recommendation specifically?

LGen Frances J. Allen: We have a responsibility actually to be coming back to and reporting on how we are progressing with the recommendations, all 107 recommendations. We focused initially on the first 36 of the 107 recommendations, which were ones that we could get after right away. I think we spoke to this at a technical briefing that we provided before and we certainly would be happy to provide further information on the implementation of the report at a time of your choosing.

• (1645)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

We are now on to our second round.

With that, we welcome Mr. Fast to the committee. You have five minutes, please.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm looking forward to the discussion around this table.

General Allen, thank you for saying that your first priority is your people. That's the way it should be, especially for our armed forces who are serving Canadians the way they are.

Can you tell me what the current shortfall of recruits is? Is it around 11,000?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I couldn't give you the exact number. My knowledge is it's around 8,000, but I could ask General Bourgon if she has more accurate figures than that.

MGen Lise Bourgon: That's approximately the shortfall in the recruits. It's about 7,500 recruits that we're short, actual recruits. There's also a gap in the training, how many individuals in the CAF are trained and ready to be employed on operation, but 7,500 is a good number.

Hon. Ed Fast: Can you tell me, since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, how many members were either forced out of the CAF or voluntarily left because of their vaccination status?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I can take that question.

When mandatory vaccination became a requirement for both entry into the Canadian Forces and for service in the Canadian Forces, we set out to have our people vaccinated or committed to have every individual fill out an attestation as to their vaccination status. For those who have requested accommodation for either physical, medical or spiritual reasons, there were a total of, I think, 1,300 people. Those are people who requested accommodations from getting the vaccination. To date, 158 is the last count that I know were approved; 980 were denied, and there still remain about 160 files that are still pending review. Those, I would say, are the numbers as they pertain to the approval.

Then there are administrative measures that are applied for those who do not wish to get vaccinated. If they wish to change their minds and get vaccinated, that's wonderful. Otherwise, there will be an administrative review that will likely lead to release.

Hon. Ed Fast: If and when vaccine mandates are lifted at the federal level, would these members who have been forced out or left voluntarily be welcome back to the CAF?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Vaccination is a requirement. To be vaccinated is a requirement for entry into the Canadian Armed

Forces. We know that vaccinations work to save lives and to protect people going forward. We in the Canadian Armed Forces are often called upon to go and serve and to go into communities to help.

Teamwork is what we're all about in the military and we know that getting vaccinated—

Hon. Ed Fast: I understand that. I just want to know.... I think what you're saying is that, whether or not federal vaccine mandates are lifted, anybody who wants to be a member of the armed forces has to be vaccinated against the COVID virus. Is that correct? That will be a permanent requirement going forward.

LGen Frances J. Allen: That is the requirement at this time, unless they are unable to be vaccinated.

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you.

I'd like to talk about average retirement age. When does an armed forces member typically retire, at what age?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Canadian Forces members enter on different lengths of contracts. They maybe first have an initial contract for three or five years. Then they can extend to a longer contract. From a maximum age perspective, normally at the age of 55 you make an election as to whether or not you would like to serve until 60. We allow that to take place. There are even some instances on a case-by-case basis where people can serve past the age of 60.

• (1650)

Hon. Ed Fast: It seems to me that we have this resource, people who are over 55 years of age, who have all these skill sets, acquired knowledge and experience who could be used beyond the age of 55, because Canadians are living healthier and longer.

Do you have any plans to pursue a program that would allow members to serve longer, even if they don't comply with the fitness requirements?

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Fast hasn't left you any time to answer that question, but I'm hearing an application by Mr. Fast for consideration of that.

Hon. Ed Fast: Thank you. That would be great.

LGen Frances J. Allen: Do you want to join?

The Chair: He's a little light in the fitness requirements.

We'll have Mr. May for five minutes, please.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, thank you all for being here to contribute to and round out this study. Of course, thank you for your continued service.

My first question is about the universality of service. We've heard that this principle may no longer reflect the realities of a modern military force. What work is CAF doing to re-evaluate this principle?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I'm going to turn this over to General Bourgon. It's her team that is responsible for universality of service and its review.

MGen Lise Bourgon: Thank you very much, Vice Chief.

It's an excellent question, Mr. Chair. There is a review ongoing right now, looking at modernizing how we apply the universality of service principle across the CAF. The new process that we're developing will be scientifically tested, based on approved generic tasks that are required from every member of the CAF, be it in the army, the air force or the navy. These tasks are things like erecting a temporary shelter, performing sentry duties, administering first aid and CPR, and maintaining and operating a personal service weapon. In total, we have about 22 of those tasks that have been deemed essential as a basic soldier task. These tasks have been broken down by their physical requirements, but also by their cognitive capacity. They will be informed, of course, by a GBA+ analysis.

These tasks are going to be the baseline that will form our new minimum operational standard, and they'll be clearly defined and measurable. At the end of the day, the reality is that there is a unique requirement for all of our CAF members to be deployable and to perform, as I said, a wide range of tasks as soldiers first, regardless of their occupation.

These minimum operational standards will guarantee our operational effectiveness and ensure that we have a force that can quickly provide support in emergencies across Canada and in international operations.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you.

We've heard through testimony at this committee that most Canadians, unfortunately, have a very limited understanding of what a career in the armed forces looks like and what the requirements are to be that soldier. What is the CAF doing to change that?

LGen Frances J. Allen: That leads to the heart of the question around incentivizing and recruiting: making sure that people are aware of the opportunity that is available for them.

I would ask General Brodie to talk about some of the approaches that they're taking to make Canadians writ large, but also applicants, aware of the types of opportunities that could be available to them, should they be interested.

Mr. Bryan May: Are there specific challenges that you're looking at and trying to find solutions for, to focus specifically on young people, but also diverse Canadians? How do we make them aware of careers in the armed forces?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I'll turn that over to General Brodie.

BGen Krista Brodie: As part of our recruiting modernization implementation team approach, we're looking very specifically at targeted advertising, marketing and attractions and how we partner across communities at all levels of Canadian society to build awareness.

We have a particular focus on general awareness, on women's recruiting programs, paid education programs and our priority occupations. Those occupations are typically STEM occupations that we have a difficult time recruiting sufficient numbers to. There's indigenous awareness and our reserve force awareness.

We are looking at programs where we partner with the various professional associations. We're leveraging our platform at forcs.ca to provide that one-stop shop with respect to information around the Canadian Forces and all of the over 100 occupations

that are active and that we're recruiting to on any given day. We're using those focused advertising programs in partnership with the ADM of public affairs.

We're prioritizing the processing of women's files and employment equity files. We're including more diversity in our frontline recruiting teams. We're partnering with programs like our CAF sports programs.

We're entering into contracts with organizations like Skills Canada, Build a Dream, the federal safety, security and intelligence career fairs, and organizations that focus on attraction activities, particularly for women in diverse communities.

We're about to embark on a very exciting—

• (1655)

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there, Mr. May.

Thank you, General Brodie.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Chabot. You have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What importance is given to the French language both at the recruitment stage and during a career, within the armed forces?

Many people have told us, rightly or wrongly, but probably with good reason, that the French language is a second-class language, particularly in the context of training. Furthermore, when someone is transferred, they are often sent to a more anglophone area, where the services you were talking about are difficult to receive in French, both for the military member and for their family.

Are you willing to give the French language a greater place in the forces?

[*English*]

LGen Frances J. Allen: The member is absolutely correct. Bilingualism is a cornerstone. It is a foundational part of who we are as Canadians and the Canadian Armed Forces. Promoting and the use of both official languages is certainly something that is important to us.

We do have a little over 400 of what I would call bilingual Canadian Armed Forces units. That's about 180 bilingual units in unilingual regions. That really speaks to what the daily language of work is. As it pertains to being able to receive services in your linguistic preference of English or French, that is something we need to make available to people regardless of where they are, so they can receive the internal services and support, particularly when it is about their personal services. We are, of course, challenged to make sure that our distribution of people can do that all times and in all places.

I would say that we're not successful all of the time in being able to have that first person you contact be somebody who can provide service in your preferred language. Our approach is to make sure that can happen. It just may not be your first contact.

As it pertains to training—

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I'm sorry for interrupting you, but the time is up.

Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

Madam Mathysen, you have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On one of the occasions that General Wayne Eyre was at this committee, he spoke about the need for more education in addressing sexual misconduct in the CAF and making that education far more frequent.

Can you update the committee on the progress being made on that in terms of the frequency of anti-harassment training? Is it at the point where you think you're going to be making that much-needed progress?

• (1700)

LGen Frances J. Allen: There certainly are initiatives and programs ahead. I'll turn the floor to General Carignan, who is responsible for both the harassment prevention program and our professional conduct and culture within the CAF. She can speak to the initiatives that are currently being looked at.

Lieutenant-General Jennie Carignan (Chief, Professional Conduct and Culture, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence): Thank you Mr. Chair, for the question.

Our programs are currently delivering what we call Respect in the CAF, which focuses on giving our participants better awareness about what sexual misconduct is, how it happens and how they can manage these situations in a better way. We have also undertaken various kinds of training and set forward training to foster an environment that is more inclusive so that these types of misconduct are mitigated or are less prevalent. For example, inclusive behaviour and inclusive leadership are part of the developments that we have also set in motion.

We have a multipronged approach in that space. It's not strictly about providing training. It's also about creating the environment and providing skills to leaders to foster the environment that will be less fostering to any type of sexual misconduct or misconduct as a whole.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Mr. Zimmer, welcome to the committee. You have five minutes.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the opportunity.

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing today.

As you know, Canada's role in the world follows a “peace through strength” kind of model. I think the challenges we've seen in past years have been about having adequate investments in the

military. We're talking about retention. Our number one asset when it comes to the military is our people.

The Royal Military College of Canada's Sean Maloney has said that posture has to be maintained for us to be credible both to our potential enemies and to our allies.

My role, if you don't know, is to be shadow minister for northern affairs, Arctic sovereignty and northern economic development. I'm going to ask my questions based on the Arctic, the north and that perspective.

Having adequate people in the north is a concern to all Canadians, I believe, but if you live in the north and in the Arctic specifically, you're very concerned with the lack of presence of our military up there.

I have a couple of questions for you. How many military are stationed full-time in the north? I'll qualify the north as the Arctic area of Canada.

LGen Frances J. Allen: I'm afraid I probably can't give you the exact number. I would say our largest northern base would be Joint Task Force North in Yellowknife. That is where we have the greatest footprint.

There are, of course, Canadian rangers, who are stationed throughout northern communities and who perform an incredibly important role for us as it pertains to awareness and who provide support to communities and other types of support tasks that are needed when there's activity in the north that they can contribute towards.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Right. We certainly appreciate the rangers and all they do for our country.

What recruiting efforts exist to recruit that northern individual who likely will stay in the north once they've been trained? They'll come back and actually stay and serve out their time in the north. What are the efforts and what specifically are you doing to reach out to northerners to serve in the north? Also, what opportunities exist for those who want to stay in the north and serve actually close to their home communities?

The Chair: Again, Mr. Zimmer has run right up to the five-minute mark. Maybe someone could work an answer in on the next round.

Mr. Fisher, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here, for their expert testimony and also for their service to our country. As a side note, General Bourgon, it's very nice to see you again. I spent some time with you when you were in Cole Harbour.

We had a witness last week or at the start of this week who talked about the recruitment process being slow and inefficient. We heard General Allen say today that there's intense competition. We also heard someone mention the other day—and I think General Brodie touched on it as well—marketing for recruitment.

Those things are all circling in my mind and then I think about universality of service and a comment that was made. I think it was General Bourgon who said that we must have a force that's deployable. I think about the modern.... I think it was General Whitecross who said that yesterday's war is different from today's war.

I'm going back to a question that sort of was already asked. Is universality of service absolutely necessary when we have trained people for cyber and we have to compete with the private sector to get those brilliant minds in the CAF? Do we have to insist that they are deployable if they're going to potentially spend most or much of their career looking at a computer screen?

Again, I'm thinking about the comments that were made Monday and today. I'm trying to bring it back full circle to whether we need to look at how we recruit and modernize the ways we do it, with maybe a little bit of give and take with all those things I just brought up.

● (1705)

LGen Frances J. Allen: It's an accurate assessment that the demands of the military life can differ amongst the different types of jobs that you have, the different types of roles that you play.

When we talk about universality of service, it truly is the baseline requirements to be able to be a CAF member. As you then move into each occupation, there are sometimes, I would say, higher or more stringent occupational requirements that require other skill sets, other capacities to be able to perform those functions. We don't want to confuse the two. If you can't meet the requirements for a particular occupation, but you can for a different occupation in the CAF, of course we want you to be able to be part of the Canadian Armed Forces and serve in that capacity. But as General Bourgon had outlined, the universality of service is truly what we believe are the minimum cognitive and physical requirements to be able to perform the range of duties that you can reasonably be expected to be called upon to do in your military service.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much for that, General.

Regarding permanent residents, I know we can do it; I know we can welcome members of that community to the CAF. Do we do it? How often do we do it? Is it part of our marketing strategy to look further into doing that?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Currently, to be a member of the Canadian Armed Forces you need to be a Canadian citizen going forward. There are some I would say very small exceptions as it pertains to permanent residents who have foreign military service that is desirable and needed within the Canadian Armed Forces, but those are a very few. I would not hold that up as a model for an efficient fast-tracking of permanent residents into the CAF if they're not Canadian citizens.

I do think there's space for us to be thinking about that particular model. It may be that General Brodie has some additional information that she would want to provide as it pertains to that entry and selection piece. I would leave that opportunity to her if she had something to add.

BGen Krista Brodie: Thank you.

What I will add is that we continue a long partnership with Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada to explore opportunities to increase the profile of candidates who are coming in as skilled foreign military applicants or more broadly across a broader spectrum of potential onboarding opportunities. What we have found historically is that from a numbers perspective, the value proposition has not weighed out in favour of that being a high enough priority to actually see the required policy, regulatory and legislative changes to allow that to happen.

We have been able to make very good inroads with respect to our employment equity and diversity recruiting in many sectors, but that is an option, I would say, as we adopt a modern mobilization mindset where really everything is on the table, and we look to advance these issues either as immediate stabilizing efforts, short- to mid-term modernization efforts or true transformative efforts.

● (1710)

The Chair: We're going to have to leave it there, Mr. Fisher. Thank you.

Colleagues, we're running up to where the bells might start ringing, but we have 15 minutes from when the bells start ringing. I'm going to take a six-minute round and squeeze it down to a five-minute round, and that will probably take us to the end.

Mr. Motz, you're going to lead off with the five minutes, please.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Generals, for being here, and thank you very much for your service.

I was intrigued, General Allen, with respect to a comment you made in a response to an earlier question from Mr. Fast about the 980 individuals who were denied their request for COVID consideration or for not following the mandate consideration, and the party line, I suppose, that you took with respect to moving forward with it: that when the mandates lift—and they will—the armed forces might still require that. I'm a little concerned about that. Will it have an impact on the capability to recruit?

I asked retired General Whitecross this question on Monday, and I'll put it to you, General Allen. Specifically, I know you're not retired, but in your role specific to retention and recruitment, in an ideal world, if you had one or two things where you could say that we need to fix this in the Canadian Armed Forces in order to properly retain and recruit people, what comes to mind for you off the top of your head with your experience in doing it? I'll certainly open it up to the rest of your staff to respond if you miss something.

This is an ideal world and you're in charge: What would you do?

LGen Frances J. Allen: In an ideal world, I think one of the things that we need to do is to have our policies more tailored to the realities that people face at different times of their career and to have the flexibility to be able to manage your professional demands and your family demands going forward.

On the initiatives that General Bourgon spoke about, the Seamless Canada initiatives, if we can get the level of provincial and federal supports to families and to military members for cross-border recognition of the qualifications of spouses, I think that goes a long way to actually making the demands of our lifestyle in the military easier. That makes staying in the military and having fulfilling careers less of a choice, it seems, that you're making between professional success and the success of your family.

In an ideal world, that is where I would focus: on creating those opportunities for flexibility at the different parts of people's careers where they need it, for men and for women.

Mr. Glen Motz: I think Mr. May mentioned this earlier, and it was certainly mentioned by other witnesses. We talked about the universality of service. When we think of it, National Defence has the largest intelligence component in all of the apparatus of national security intelligence in our country, and not everybody in that particular realm is a regular forces warrior-mentality individual.

I'm wondering about this. If we're talking about cybersecurity and the need for cybersecurity, and then all the cyber/digital world that we're facing, would it not seem logical that there would be some serious relaxation of the universality of service? Even specific to certain career paths—there are 105 career paths, we've been told, or somewhere around that, within the armed forces—would it not make sense that we're trying to recruit the best people for these positions? Can latitude not be exercised in some of these?

• (1715)

LGen Frances J. Allen: What I would say is that I think that the workforce composition that's needed for different types of activity varies.

For an infantry platoon, it will be mostly military personnel. When we talk about the security and intelligence apparatus and those programs, that is a combination of skilled public servants, of allied capabilities and of military—soldiers, sailors, aviators. It is a combination.

Some of the work environments are a heavy investment in CAF members. Others are a hybrid of multiple different types of employees. While it may be that not everybody who works, as you say, in the intelligence domain, for example, is going to deploy all the time, those military members who are part of that organization do have to be able to perform the minimum military functions that are required, but we have the diversity.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Madam Lambropoulos, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be splitting my time with Ms. O'Connell.

First of all, General, thank you for being here with us to answer our questions and for your great testimony.

Probably one of my only questions is whether you think the CAF is doing enough right now to recruit a diverse population. What are the programs in place, and what more could be done?

I don't know if you're allowed to give us your opinion on whether or not you think we should be opening it up to permanent

residents. I know you spoke to this already, but could you maybe give your opinion on whether this would be beneficial or whether there are red flags that are stopping this from happening?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Certainly as it pertains to creating a more diverse representation within the Canadian forces, I think we must do it. We need to do better than we are right now.

We need to move forward on some of those targeted programs General Brodie spoke about and look to creating awareness and interest within elements of Canadian society that we wish to have as representative and part of the Canadian Armed Forces so that the forces reflects its Canadian citizens. The work of General Brodie's team is part of that, from some of the aboriginal youth programs and awareness programs through to working with communities across the country. That is something we have to work on.

As it pertains to entry into the Canadian Armed Forces, while being a citizen is one of the requirements currently in legislation, we also have to have people who have the capacity for us to make sure they can operate with the security clearance. Everybody is enrolled with reliability screening, so they need to be able to have a verifiable history. That's about efficiency and effectiveness more than anything else. Do we have the connections and the capacity to verify their history?

When you're talking about a 17-year-old, it's quite simple, as they have a fairly easily verifiable life. It becomes a little more complex with a 30-year-old who has not been in Canada for more than, say, three years, because then your capacity to have that time to do a background verification is more complex. That's not to say that somebody who becomes a citizen can't do that, but there are a number of considerations. It's not just about at entry.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Emmanuella, for sharing your time. Thank you, Generals, for being here.

My question is in regard to vaccination as well. On the RMC website, there's a list of things that are required for recruits to bring, and one of them is actually their vaccination booklet. RMC requires vaccination for things like measles, mumps and tetanus. Your vaccination status is required to enter education programs in this country.

On it, it says, "In addition to routine vaccines such as tetanus, the Canadian Armed Forces provides vaccines that protect against diseases to which you may be exposed on specific deployments".

Does the Canadian Armed Forces have any intention of no longer requiring protection for its members from things like measles, mumps and malaria if they were to travel into those places, or is that something that is just political, as the Conservatives have suggested?

• (1720)

LGen Frances J. Allen: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair. I am certainly not an expert on the specific vaccination requirements of all we have to have. I think we all have our little yellow books.

We do recognize that sometimes when we deploy CAF members to different parts of the world where there are diseases that are either endemic or not existing in Canada, we will require CAF members to be vaccinated so that they can safely carry out their duties in those locations. Those are, I would say, the additional vaccinations that may be required from the standard ones that people need to hold.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. O'Connell.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have five minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you.

Your answer to my question about the French language in the forces showed me that you're aware of this issue and that it's important to you.

That said, is there currently a concrete plan to increase its place in training?

According to the testimony we've heard, training is done mainly in English and much less in French.

Do you have a concrete plan indicating your intention to work on this issue?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

We always aim to ensure that courses are offered in both French and English to members of the forces. Because of the fact that there are different numbers of francophones and anglophones in the forces population, sometimes we have more courses in English. There may be two English courses, followed by a course in French and another course in English, for example. We make sure that courses are offered to members of the forces. Unfortunately, if you are still waiting for a course in your language, you may have to wait a few weeks or a few months before the course in your preferred language is available. We sometimes provide assistance to members if they want to take courses in a language that is not their mother tongue. Assistance is available in both English and French.

It's true that we don't offer courses at the same frequency in both languages.

Ms. Louise Chabot: The reason I ask is that we're dealing with a study on recruitment and retention. These are important issues. For members of the forces, they can seem to be a barrier rather than a motivation to pursue a career. When you feel you have to be assimilated into another language, it's a sign that efforts have to be made.

The private sector attracts more skills or talent. What can you do to counter this, so that the forces become at least equal to the private sector or are truly competitive?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I don't think Canadians always realize that being in the forces is not just one thing. There are so many jobs and opportunities. You can become an engineer, a pilot, and so on. There are a whole range of possibilities. We need to highlight

what's available to the public, so that people who like to fly a plane can do so in the forces rather than with Air Canada or WestJet, and allow their hopes to be realized in the forces rather than in civilian jobs.

• (1725)

Ms. Louise Chabot: You agree with me that salary conditions can be an issue.

LGen Frances J. Allen: Yes, absolutely. Sometimes there are big differences between the salaries in the forces and in the private sector. There are also the opportunities and experiences that exist in the forces that don't exist in private employment. We really need to highlight what's available. The responsibility we give to young people is a great experience early in life. These experiences don't exist in the private sector.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[*English*]

For the final five minutes, we have Madame Mathyssen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Bourgon, you wrote a document on employment equity, and you had several recommendations. One of them was to fully implement the women in force program in the country. It was a pilot program, I believe.

Can you talk about whether that's actually happening and your reasoning behind that?

MGen Lise Bourgon: The women in force program was implemented as a pilot project pre-COVID, to give the chance to women to try, for a few days, the military life and gain more information. We have talked about Canadians not being aware of what the military is about. It was a safe space for women to give it a shot on the physical fitness and understanding the different occupations.

Sadly, we had to stop because of COVID. We're looking at reinserting it in our program, because I think it's an awesome program for people, mostly women, to try without the pressure. We're going to start in the foreseeable future to look at this program again, because there were some great benefits for women. If they didn't want to join, at least they understood the military.

We know, through the research, that women join the military more from word of mouth. They know someone who has been in the military or have advice from family or friends. If more people have the chance to try this program, it will be a success in trying to sell it to the women in the Canadian population.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: You said it was very successful pre-COVID. What were the numbers? How many women did you get in versus how many stayed? Do you have those numbers for the committee?

MGen Lise Bourgon: I don't have them with me. I will have to take this on notice and provide this information at a later date.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: That would be great. Thank you.

One of the other recommendations that we had from the status of women committee to the Government of Canada was to establish an external defence advisory committee on women and minorities in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Could one of the witnesses, I guess who it best applies to, comment on that recommendation and say whether you believe it has merit and should be followed through with?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I will turn that question potentially over to General Carignan, who has been looking to provide a viewpoint on the best ways for us to consult different groups out there.

Jennie, perhaps you could jump in there.

LGen Jennie Carignan: We are developing currently a way to do just that, via various consultation groups inviting specific stakeholders and having regular touchpoints with them—to consult. They would be external to Defence.

Internal to Defence, we have also our defence advisory groups, who provide a lot of awareness on equity-seeking groups, and provide us, again, with the data that allows us to devise and design initiatives to increase diversity and to increase an environment that is safe and welcoming.

There are two pieces to that. We need to do our work internally via our defence advisory groups, but also externally, via the advice of various stakeholders who have lots of expertise in that space.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Mathysen.

That will bring to a conclusion our time.

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank each one of you for your excellence in presentations, General Allen, General Bourgon, General Carignan and General Brodie. You've considerably aided our study.

Before I gavel this to a conclusion, there are two things.

We've going to open up the study on aid to civil authority on Monday. We have some witnesses who are available on Monday, and we need party witness lists by this Friday.

General Eyre is not available next week, so we're going to have leave the recruitment and retention study open for a while longer, and we're scrambling to do draft reports on the threat analysis study.

We're keeping a few balls in the air here, and I appreciate your ability to work with us, colleagues.

With that, this meeting is adjourned, and, again, thank you, each one of you.

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