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Chair: The Honourable John McKay





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• (1115)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)):** I bring this meeting to order.

Thank you, colleagues, for your patience.

We have before us three familiar witnesses: Dr. Youri Cormier, Dr. David Perry and Vice-Admiral (Retired) Darren Hawco.

Thank you to all three of you for your patience as well.

I understand that Dr. Perry and Dr. Cormier have statements. Admiral Hawco is not going to make a statement, and we'll save a little bit of time there, but we're 20 minutes late, so the first round, colleagues, instead of six minutes, will go down to five.

In no particular order, I'll ask Dr. Cormier for his opening five-minute statement, please.

Thank you.

**Dr. Youri Cormier (Executive Director, Conference of Defence Associations):** Thank you.

Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity of having the CDA and the CDA Institute appear as a witness today for your study on Canada's defence policy update.

[Translation]

The Conference of Defence Associations, or CDA, was founded in 1932. Today, it serves as an umbrella group for 40 member associations, representing more than 400,000 active and retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

The defence policy starts off with a dire premise, but one that is absolutely correct: The geopolitical environment has rapidly deteriorated. Since safeguarding Canada's territorial sovereignty is the paramount purpose of national defence, the strategic emphasis placed on protecting the Canadian Arctic is welcomed. How the impacts of climate change are integrated is also crucial, because we've seen recently that floods, forest fires, hurricanes and other catastrophes are placing growing demands on our armed forces.

We see two significant and positive changes to the status quo: First, the DPU increases defence spending over time, moving us closer to the 2% target we pledged to NATO during the Wales sum-

mit. Second, it proposes a quadrennial approach to keep Canada's defence and security policy in lockstep with world events.

Regarding the new spending, let's just say that this is much easier said than done. The procurement system is broken. Every year, billions of dollars provided in projected expenditures for "Strong, Secure, Engaged" remain unspent and have been compounding over time. Given that the system buckles at spending between \$4 billion and \$6 billion per year on capital expenditures, how can it possibly manage to spend \$14 billion in 2026 without a procurement overhaul? The system and its costs have left the CAF in a dire state of readiness.

[Translation]

The armed forces will have to recruit more than 17,000 members. We have enough ammunition for a few days, but NATO countries should have more than 30 days' worth of ammunition. If Canada were called on to participate in a major operation, only 58% of the Canadian Armed Forces would be available to respond, and 45% of the Canadian Armed Forces' equipment is currently unavailable or unusable. Decades of underfunding have finally caught up with us.

[English]

We're reaching a rust-out threshold on too many key capabilities. Meanwhile, this past year, the Department of National Defence saw its funding slashed by roughly \$1 billion, mostly to its operations and maintenance budgets, so it's one dollar in, one dollar out.

More troublesome still is that while the new monies are earmarked to acquire future capabilities, these cuts to O and M are immediate, and they impact operational readiness today.

We've seen good progress in recapitalizing the RCAF and the RCN; however, the army and reserves appear to have been given a back seat in envisioning the future capabilities and missions of our forces. There's also a missed opportunity here to envision the role of the reserves and considering them as a means to achieve personnel objectives in both numbers and diversity.

The CDA is concerned about the lack of discussion on expeditionary capability: Will the army be confined to its borders for domestic operations in the future?

The document also doesn't say enough on how we should fix the backlog in recruitment and retention so that interested candidates are brought quickly into service. Without a plan to reach our personnel numbers, the defence spending plan is notional. New platforms cannot be operated without people.

Although mentioned as requirements, there appear to be no funding lines for submarines, replacement tanks, ground-based air defence, replacement labs, long-range strike missiles for the RCN and the RCAF, future artillery and all-terrain vehicles for the north, or a fast replenishment of ammunition stocks in the context of the war in Ukraine. Many of these could be streamlined by treating them as national security exemptions and bought off the shelf as proven and readily available systems. We seem not to fully appreciate the urgency at the intersection of the CAF's readiness challenges, the state of global security and the demands of climate change in the way that's being exerted through multiple requests for aid to civil authorities.

In world affairs, compared to where we stood a few decades ago, Canada has come to think of itself as a lot smaller than we actually are. We are the ninth-largest economy on the planet, and yet we wrongly believe we can't afford to be the ninth-largest player. Many nations—smaller nations—have greater pull on a direction the world is taking, and often that's not for the better.

• (1120)

Part of the problem likely stems from the fact that our industrial and technological benefits, the ITB system, has created such a chasm between how much we spend on defence relative to how much or how little capability we get for the money invested.

Also, trade and industrial agreements with the United States need to be better leveraged to achieve economies of scale.

**The Chair:** Dr. Cormier, could you wind up, please?

**Dr. Yuri Cormier:** Can I have 30 seconds or so?

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Dr. Yuri Cormier:** Finally, and very importantly, our governing party and its opposition parties must avoid the historical tendency to over-politicize national security and turn it into a partisan joust. National security is too important to be instrumentalized this way. To provide oversight, direction and continuity, Parliament must develop a model that builds multi-party consensus on these matters, perhaps leveraging the new quadrennial policy updates as a whole-of-Parliament effort. Other nations apply this approach and realize stability and positive national security outcomes as a result.

In closing, please note that Vice-Admiral Darren Hawco, the former chief of force development and military lead for “Strong, Secure, Engaged” and recently Canada's military representative to NATO, is joining me today. The committee can direct questions to either of us.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Dr. Perry.

**Dr. David Perry (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Global Affairs Institute):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

Thanks for the opportunity to appear today to speak about Canada's new defence policy, “Our North, Strong and Free”.

In my opening remarks, I'm going to talk about the policy itself, considerations for its implementation and how I think it's being viewed by our allies as we await the Washington, D.C., NATO summit celebrating the alliance's 75th anniversary in three short weeks.

“Our North, Strong and Free” is a bit of a paradox, in my assessment. On the one hand, it's building on previous defence policies dating back to 2005. In so doing, it's doing a good job of capturing the fraught international security environment we live in and how Canada needs to respond to deal with that current reality. It also pledges to invest in many needed capabilities and makes a generationally large commitment of funding to the Canadian military. By my math, the financial commitment that's been made since 2017 on a cash basis is now about roughly a quarter of a trillion dollars over about a quarter of a century.

On the other hand, though, “Our North, Strong and Free” falls well short of where we should be in terms of committing resources to defence, because we're starting from a very low start point, and it also doesn't change the behaviour that would be needed to actually make use of those resources effectively.

It also highlights the widening disconnect between Canada's approach to defence and that of our allies, and it demonstrates no intention on Canada's part of living up to the key commitment we made to our NATO allies regarding defence investment only a year ago. Given that the policy took two years to produce, it is a serious shortcoming that it only announces further review of defence procurement, instead of revealing how we will actually change defence procurement.

Similarly, the policy also offers little indication of how recruiting and enrolling new Canadian troops will be addressed and instead outlines an absurdly long eight-year window to return the Canadian Armed Forces back to its current authorized strength. That strength, I would note, will be insufficient to operate some of that new equipment that funding has been committed for, including airborne early warning and control aircraft, among other initiatives.

The policy also bizarrely notes the need for new capabilities—some of which my colleague here just itemized—and pledges to explore their acquisition, but it provides no money to actually buy them.

As a result, if everything in “Our North, Strong and Free” unfolded exactly as it was intended to on the day it was published, Canada's defence spending would have reached just 1.76% of gross domestic product by 2029. As everyone here knows, Canada has committed to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence, but this policy clearly conveys that we have no intention of doing so.

With respect to implementation of the policy, in my observation, “Our North, Strong and Free” appears to have been written with much less focus on implementing the policy than was the case with the previous defence policy of “Strong, Secure, and Engaged”. That initiative in 2017 came with many implementation-enhancing transparency measures that I see absolutely no sign of today, and I would offer that the implementation of “Strong, Secure, Engaged” has been highly uneven. Despite successes like the many Royal Canadian Air Force projects, which have moved along quite well in recent years, I would remind the committee that the very first initiative in “Strong, Secure, Engaged” was to, quote: “Reduce significantly the time to enroll in the Canadian Armed Forces by reforming all aspects of military recruiting.”

Had that initiative been meaningfully implemented, I do not believe that the committee recently would have been told that despite over 70,000 applications being received by the Canadian military, just 4,000 members were actually enrolled. Fixing this unacceptable situation in many fewer than the eight years allotted must be the top priority for defence. Until it is addressed swiftly, the implementation of the rest of “Our North, Strong and Free” will suffer.

Finally, let me comment on how “Our North, Strong and Free” is likely being viewed by our allies in the context of the forthcoming NATO summit in Washington.

I acknowledge that Canada has made and is making important operational contributions to NATO, including in our north, across the Atlantic Ocean and in Latvia, but this alone is very clearly insufficient now, and we are increasingly out of line with our allies and our own commitments.

Canada heads into the Washington summit as the only ally not meeting either of the two NATO investment pledges, since we neither spend 2% of GDP on defence nor send 20% of our defence expenditures toward equipment purchases and related research and development. “Our North, Strong and Free” indicates that we will meet the equipment target next year, but I'd offer that “Strong, Secure and Engaged” indicated we were going to hit that investment target too, and we haven't.

As I mentioned, reaching 1.76% of GDP would require both every dollar earmarked in “Our North, Strong and Free” to be spent as intended and the economic projection the policy was based on to hold. As I mentioned, I see serious shortcomings in the policy's implementation, so actually spending to that level I think is problematic.

Further, just since “Our North, Strong and Free” was published, the OECD economic projections used in that calculation have already been revised upwards for the next two years, which means that the share of our GDP spent on defence will drop.

• (1125)

I'll note that the calculations underpinning the policy assume that by 2029 the Canadian economy will be hundreds of billions of dollars smaller than the federal budget, as just published, predicts it will be, which will result in a smaller share of GDP going towards defence. As a result, as of today, we are already falling short of the spending as a share of GDP outlined in the policy.

**The Chair:** Dr. Perry, can you wind up, please?

**Dr. David Perry:** We will fall short of 1.76% of GDP by 2029 unless more money is committed to defence and conditions are created to actually spend that money.

Not only are we heading into the Washington summit with no intention or plan to spend 2% of GDP on defence, as we told our allies we would; we are also falling short already of the spending mark we said we would reach just two months ago.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Admiral Hawco, I understand that you won't be making a statement but will be participating in the question-and-answer period.

Mr. Bezan, you have five minutes.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank our witnesses for attending.

Mr. Cormier, you talked about making sure that policies are moving in lockstep. Do you believe Canadian foreign policy informed the defence policy update? Do we have a foreign policy?

**Dr. Yuri Cormier:** Yes—when's the last time that happened?

I feel as though Darren would probably be better equipped to handle that question, actually.

Do you want to jump in?

**Vice-Admiral (Retired) Darren Hawco (Board member, CDA Institute):** Sure.

What I would offer is that when we did the exercise in 2017, there was that cyclical engagement, and then quality assurance against existing policy and intentions towards the latter portion of the policy development period, after it had been presented to cabinet in broad terms and before it was actually published. We had that kind of coherence.

I expect it is similar in this particular exercise, in that we don't have a coherently formed and published foreign policy. There would have been that kind of internal consultation throughout, and then a validation exercise towards the back end.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Thank you.

I think that would explain why Minister Joly said this is “news to me” and would have to look into it when she was asked on CBC this weekend, or at the end of last week, about a Canadian naval vessel sitting in Cuba alongside Russian navy ships.

Minister Blair on the weekend said that this was all very well planned, yet the news release that came from the Department of National Defence on April 18 talked about the HMCS *Margaret Brooke* going to Operation Caribbe and Exercise Tradewinds with no mention of a port of call stop. Then you have the ship sail in and an announcement made on June 12 that it “will conduct a port visit to Havana from June 14 to 17, 2024, in recognition of the long-standing bilateral relationship between Canada and Cuba”.

Cuba, of course, is a Communist regime with multiple human rights violations, a country that has allowed its citizens to join the Russian army and commit war in Ukraine. Their own military is doing training in Belarus, a strong ally of Russia. I question the logic in having Canadian warships giving credence to a Communist regime like Cuba.

Mr. Chair, I move the following motion: “Given that HMCS *Margaret Brooke* docked in Havana, Cuba, at the same time as several Russian warships, and that the Minister of Foreign Affairs appeared to know nothing about this deployment, telling CBC News, “Listen, this is something that I need to look at much, much closer. This is information that is news to me”, the committee call the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to appear separately for no less than one hour each within seven days of this motion being adopted.”

• (1130)

**The Chair:** I take that as an intention to move a motion. You have not given 48 hours, so it's not debatable now.

**Mr. James Bezan:** It is relevant to the testimony.

**The Chair:** I do not think it is relevant to the testimony. We're here to talk about policy, to maybe talk about strategy—

**Mr. James Bezan:** This is foreign policy.

**The Chair:** We're not talking about tactics. I interpret that motion as a tactical motion on what the military does.

The ruling of the chair is that 48 hours is required in order to be able to debate this motion.

**Mr. James Bezan:** I challenge the chair's ruling.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Wilson):** The question is, shall the ruling of the chair be sustained?

**The Chair:** Tell them what's sustained.

**The Clerk:** Yes. I'm sorry.

That means, shall the ruling of the chair be upheld?

(Ruling of the chair sustained: yeas 7; nays 4)

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. James Bezan:** How much time do I have, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** You went for three minutes and two seconds, so you have two minutes left.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Okay.

I'll go back to questions for witnesses, although I have to say I'm completely disgusted by the decision of Minister Blair to allow our ships to sit in dock alongside Russian warships.

Let's talk about this, Mr. Perry: You are critical of the lack of funding or long-term plans for some major procurements like submarines and air defence systems. Can you drill down on this? How is this going to impact not only how badly we're going to be perceived at the Washington NATO summit but also our ability to meet the threats that are currently challenging Canada?

**Dr. David Perry:** In terms of how we'll be perceived, I think it's no simpler than 1.76%. Even if we hit that, it isn't the 2% we committed to. I think there are serious implications when we don't live up to what we said we would do.

In terms of what that money would be spent on and what would come with it, despite it being a generational investment and the low start state, “Our North, Strong and Free” is only funding to keep some of the lights on. It will not keep the lights on in a submarine capability, for example, and for many other platforms. It doesn't even continue the same type of Canadian military we have today. It doesn't invest in other much-needed capabilities, like an integrated system for air and missile defence, or systems that would enable digital transformation.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Cormier, you talked about the recruitment crisis and not using reserves to augment the forces to help get some of those numbers up. What are the recommendations from CDA on fixing the recruitment situation we have?

**The Chair:** Answer very briefly, please.

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** Is there a specific thing—

• (1135)

**VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** Youri, I'm sorry.

What I would offer is this: We need to treat this as a system-to-system issue. You can create a digital platform to bring people in. You can address aspects of getting faster medical screening or security clearance screening. However, unless the services themselves adapt their ability to take a large inflow through the various military occupation training structures—which is always a challenge—you will just have a bottleneck at a different place.

The point of view needs to be one of taking a step back and looking at it system-to-system, not simply transferring—

**The Chair:** Thank you, Admiral Hawco.

I apologize insincerely for cutting people off, but I have 25 minutes left and a couple of rounds of questions that I want to get in. I know Mr. Collins will be very religious about his time allocation.

**An hon. member:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Okay. She will, as well.

Thank you.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.):** Thanks, Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here to answer some questions today.

You both spoke a bit about this, but I think, Mr. Perry, you made specific mention of how our allies might see this defence policy update. I'm wondering if you can speak a bit more on that.

What parts of it are appreciated, which ones are less so and what is the expectation of our allies at this point?

**Dr. David Perry:** I think they would appreciate all the things we've pointed out as an assessment of the world, what should be done about it and what we've enumerated in terms of things we need to acquire to be in a better position to operate in that world.

Where they have expressed a lot of concern and skepticism is in our identifying a whole lot of things we need and providing no funding for them. We don't actually hit—and have no plan to hit—our committed NATO investment pledge target of 2% of GDP spending.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Mr. Cormier, you said something specific: We're the ninth-largest economy on the planet, but we're not the ninth-biggest player in terms of defence spending and what we contribute in that way.

I'm wondering what factors you think should be taken into account when looking at those numbers and our ranking. Canada is the second-largest country in the world. I imagine that plays some kind of role. If not, you can correct me. What is it that makes it more difficult for us to believe we should play a more important role in defence funding?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** There are a lot of layers here. I am going to start off by saying that with regard to our allies, at the CDA, we had the opportunity to meet with military attachés and ambassadors around town. On a day-to-day basis, there's the sense of a level of dissatisfaction that's been hanging in the air here in Ottawa for a while now. There's no escaping it.

With regard to where Canada sees itself, there's a bit of disconnect with the reputation we have as the founders of peacekeeping. If you go back 50 years, 60% of all peacekeepers on the planet were Canadians. We used to field tens of thousands of people there. Now, if you look at the numbers, it's something like 30 individuals out of 120,000 peacekeepers on the planet. There's this disconnect; Canadians think we're that country that's out there doing good in the world, but we're mostly staying at home, with the exception of the battle group in Latvia. There's more to be done here.

Whether it's with regard to the submarines or just the fact that we have a very large land mass and the largest coastline, where's the equipment to create that surveillance and that capacity?

There are a lot of questions that are not being asked here.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Do you think that it might be more difficult to prioritize because of these factors, which other countries don't necessarily have to take into account?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** The policy actually does a pretty good job of setting certain priorities and speaking to them. However, when

you look at when the money's coming in, if you see it's being punted to 10 to 15 years from now, you wonder what the sense of urgency is. I think that's what the policy really misses. It's the sense of urgency and the need to play catch-up on 30 years of underfunding the military.

I don't think we have to look at one side of the room or the other. There's been a systemic failure to keep the Canadian Armed Forces up to par with our needs and requirements and what we're supposed to do for allies.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Thank you.

Mr. Perry, you spoke a bit about the equipment target, how much we're going to be procuring and how we don't reach our target of 20%. However, in the DPU, the defence policy update, there is mention of working more with industry, and I think the goal for Canada is to make sure that we're involving it a bit more.

Do you think that this could account for why there is a delay in that? Can you speak a bit about what your thoughts are on that?

● (1140)

**Dr. David Perry:** I think that's part of the dynamic.

There are a number of things that we need to improve with our defence procurement system. The policy mentions several different initiatives, which might all end up being great if they're actually implemented. I'd note that the last defence policy had a number of good initiatives around defence procurement reform, and I'm not sure what actually happened with a lot of them.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Lambropoulos.

We'll go to Madame Mathysen for five minutes, please.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Isn't it Madame Normandin?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. It's Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here. It's always a pleasure to have them.

My questions are about our allies' perception, among other things, and they are for all three witnesses.

To begin, I would like to provide some context. I would like to bring up a passage from an article published this weekend whose title focuses on military expenditures and Ottawa's claim that it will meet the NATO target by 2029.

According to the article, Bill Blair said that he expects Canada's defence spending to reach at least 1.75% of GDP by 2029, but that other investments, such as replacing the country's aging submarine fleet or purchasing integrated air and missile defence systems, would probably push this number beyond the recommended 2%.

Minister Bill Blair also said that he thinks that inevitably brings us to over 2% in defence spending, but that he has work to do to be able to convey that to both his own country and to our allies.

Aren't these statements an attempt not to show up completely empty-handed at the Washington summit in July?

What message does that send when the minister has to publicly mention that he has to convince his own department to reach the 2% target?

Does that not give the impression that, at the end of the day, it is not credible as a comment, as an approach to the 2% target?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** The first reaction of anyone in the field would certainly be to make the following comment:

[English]

We'll believe it when we see it.

[Translation]

If the replacement of the submarines were announced in a few days, we would probably reach the target. It's a huge expense. However, there is no clarification indicating that we are going to move forward with this approach. Also, if we do that, we don't know if we'll turn to traditional equipment or if we'll opt for nuclear. There is still a lot of uncertainty about that.

Perhaps Mr. Hawco would like to add something.

[English]

**VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** I would just add that even if the major expenses you cited and the minister referred to were brought in, with the timing of bringing them in, based on projections that Mr. Perry spoke about, ultimately the dollar value we would see would probably still not necessarily be 2%. The dollar value we're talking about to achieve 2% is quite significant. I think that would make a big difference, Madam.

[Translation]

I think more needs to be done than just those two projects to reach the 2% target.

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

When the minister says that he has to convince his own government and the allies, can that send the message that they want to try to change the way the 2% target is calculated?

We want to focus on other actions taken by Canada, which wants to be perceived as a good ally. However, at the end of the day, we know that we will not reach the 2% target.

What message does that send?

[English]

**Dr. David Perry:** I would offer that if we could convey a better message about our anticipated spending, we would have presented

it. If there were a better indication of spending beyond 2029, we would also have presented that. I don't think we can actually meaningfully include anything else at present unless NATO redefines what we can include. I don't actually think we spend a lot on a lot of the other things that people commonly cite when they suggest that we might be able to bump our numbers up.

Then beyond that, I think it's also worth the committee's spending some time looking at what will happen in Canada from 2030 and beyond in terms of defence spending, because my understanding is that we've essentially moved forward a big peak in spending that was articulated in "Strong, Secure, Engaged". We're going to hit that in 2029-30, and then our spending is going to start dropping. I think at this point it might actually drop off a cliff.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

I asked the minister about this. I asked him how it was possible to hope that spending would continue in the future, given the likelihood of a change in government. He had virtually no answer to offer.

There is no binding framework beyond a policy, which even a government in power can change.

There is also no guarantee that, in the next Parliament, what the government has announced will be maintained. Shouldn't we be concerned about that?

• (1145)

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** I can give you some good examples. Denmark, Norway and even Australia have established expanded committees on national defence, where party leaders participate alongside committee members. This makes a broader kind of consensus possible, and everyone contributes to the creation of a defence policy. That provides an element of security for the future, regardless of the next government.

I think Canada should explore that model more. It has to find a way to institutionalize it, as that's exactly what our allies have done, and it works very well.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Madame Normandin.

Ms. Mathysen, you have five minutes. Thank you for your patience.

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

We go back and forth, and there's obviously a belief here today that 2% is a big deal, and yet we've consistently heard that 2% is an arbitrary number. The way each country defines how they spend 2% is different. Recently Professor Leuprecht was here, and he said that Canada isn't doing itself justice in the way that it defines how it's spending contributions.

What would you have to say to that?

**Dr. David Perry:** I don't think that's actually accurate, because I understand that there's an agreed-upon NATO framework. You don't just get to choose your own adventure in terms of what you submit and what you don't submit. You submit expenditures that are part of an eligible pool. NATO reviews all that. If you try to put forward spending on elements that aren't considered part of the formula, then they aren't accepted. There's a methodology around that.

We don't get to basically pick and choose what we do. I wouldn't really agree with that characterization.

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** Yes, there is something—I don't want to say random—but saying 2% isn't a sure bet that you're going to get exactly what you want for it. On the one hand, is the money being well spent? Is the money actually being spent?

However, the most important part is not the absolute number of 2%. It is kind of randomly stated, but it's a relative amount. If you're doing so poorly compared to your peers, you start wondering what's with burden sharing and why burden sharing does not seem to matter to Canada as much as it does to our allies.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Building—

**VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** I would just say, to make it tangible, you have a 30% rule for your mortgage. It's a rule of thumb that seems sensible, and it's applied and used as a calculus for how to consider a person's situation and how viable it is. There's a similarity to this rule-of-thumb approach that everyone has agreed to, and it's very important that everyone has agreed.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** In terms of that flexibility or burden sharing, I certainly am concerned.

Mr. Cormier, you spoke about peacekeeping within the DPU. It's not mentioned once.

There is that Canadian understanding that we are the founders of peacekeeping in the world. Canada had thousands of peacekeepers contributing in the nineties. Now we're not even meeting the targets we have set, which are very low. We've made promises in the world and we are not keeping them.

From your organization's perspective, do you think that the federal government needs to be transparent with its own people on that backtracking? Is this just a different way that we're going, or is there a change that's needed in the vision that Canadians have for peacekeeping in the world?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** It depends where you put your energies, right? If you put peacekeepers in a position....

Maybe you don't necessarily want them to be in combat or in some of the most dangerous areas, and that's fair. If Canada wants to be honest with its people about the role they want our peacekeepers to take on, sure, but maybe there is training and capacity building in those nations that are providing a lot of peacekeepers, and we could be doing that a lot more.

There is a missed opportunity to envision it, but there's also, as you say, maybe a bit of a lack of transparency in how Canadians still think of ourselves in a certain way that's not reality.

**Dr. David Perry:** I would offer that we're simply not spending enough to keep doing everything that we previously committed to.

One thing I would commend in the new policy that it at least articulated some choices. Unfortunately, I think a lack of any kind of meaningful commitment on peacekeeping is one of those choices, and we're simply not resourcing enough to do that, absent making a decision not to do something else.

● (1150)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Can you speak to the fact that there have been dates set, or at least timelines or expectations set, on that national security review, and if that's important, to how it's important and when we need to start in terms of getting to it?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** To be fair, it's actually really difficult to do. The Americans pull it off every four years, and that's I guess the model we're trying to establish here, but with minority governments, which have become the norm in Canada rather than the exception, it is a bit more of a challenge.

Again, multi-party consensus and working together is going to be really important in order to keep that four-year purpose. I think it's one of our favourite parts of the policy. At the CDA, we're really happy with the idea that every four years Canada will take a moment to reflect on these things.

It sometimes takes a year or two to get to the place where you can publish a policy update, so it means that if you're doing it every four years, you're practically doing it all the time, which is exactly where Canada's thinking needs to evolve to. We tend to put this off. DPU is a good example. It's two years late, but arguably, it very well could be four or six years late. If we had been doing it that way, we wouldn't have waited for seven years between the two.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Colleagues, we have 25 minutes' worth of questions to squeeze into eight, so this is going to be a two-minute round.

Mr. Kelly is next.

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Thank you.

I guess this is for any of our witnesses.

This DPU speaks of exploring different options. That's the theme throughout. It name-ticks a few things that are known, such as the capabilities we need on submarines and in many other areas, yet without actual, specific declarations of what the intent is, is this even a policy update at all? I mean, to say that you "explore options" is only a change in the government's policy if the previous policy was to not consider options.

Could we have your comments on the lack of specificity around actual policy changes or updates?

**Dr. David Perry:** I think that noting things are needed but not actually providing any money to acquire them is a significant problem. The policy does make a number of actual commitments of funding—enhanced maintenance, more spending on infrastructure and some investments in some new capabilities—but as I said, I think it's highly problematic to say that we need these things and then provide zero dollars to actually acquire them.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Thanks.

Mr. Cormier, would you comment?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** There are some elements that are the most urgent elements, too, like housing. That's the one that really stuck out: when I saw the housing numbers. We hear of people who are living in campers outside certain bases, of people having a hard time bringing their families or of people leaving the forces because it's too hard on the families because of housing.

You can see the numbers. In year one, there's practically zero new investment. In year two, it's a million bucks or two million. How many houses can you can build with a million bucks? That is one of the huge shortcomings here.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Okay. Let's talk about the expeditionary capability. Is this DPU going to enhance Canada's expeditionary capabilities?

You mentioned that, Mr. Cormier, so go ahead.

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** I'll start. Briefly, it doesn't say enough about expeditionary capacity and what the army can do, but to be fair, there are a lot of investments here that can have multiple uses, so you could actually leverage them toward expedition as well.

**Dr. David Perry:** I'd say yes, but it's very unclear for the army.

**VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** Yes, that's the only thing I would just double-click on.

First of all, if the government doesn't have every answer to every question, it's hard for it to actually... It wants to say it, so it will put, "Yes, we're going to explore that." If it doesn't have every single answer, it's not going to be able to provide that, because we would reasonably expect that.

However, to close, there is a pretty wide range of things being considered in the policy as funded and to be explored, so I think the—

**The Chair:** Thank you. I'm sorry.

**VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** No worries.

**The Chair:** I really enjoy cutting you off, Admiral.

Mr. Collins, you have two minutes.

**Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.):** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The DPU talks about a changing character of conflict. There are more references to cyber and cyber-attacks in this document than ever before. It talks about and addresses misinformation and disinformation, and what others are doing in the world to disrupt our institutions here domestically, as well as those of our allies.

I was going to turn to you, Mr. Cormier. You talked about over-politicized national security. I'm fascinated with what's happening south of the border, with the Republicans and where they're going with Ukraine. There seems to be a split caucus there. I think some of that misinformation and disinformation is working quite well in the United States.

It's happening here as well, of course. The Leader of the Opposition has pulled his support for Ukraine, and there's this quest to try to get as many people in the tent on the right side of the political spectrum as possible. Much of that's being driven by misinformation and disinformation on social media.

Can I get your thoughts on how the DPU addresses that and where we're going with that issue?

• (1155)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

I just couldn't hear one of the words that Mr. Collins said. He said something about the Leader of the Opposition and support for Ukraine. I didn't hear the word in between.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** I think it was his lack of support—no support for Ukraine.

**The Chair:** It was "pulled", I think.

Okay. Go ahead.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Yes. I think the witnesses heard the question.

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** There are two things.

One thing that I thought was very well done in the DPU is the description of where the world is in terms of the risks. I think, on that level, it's very well presented.

With regard to Ukraine, I think it's really fundamental that we all recognize that if Ukraine loses, the world is a much less safe place in the future. This is because it tells those who are seeking to disrupt the status quo that it can be done in imperial ways, just by taking over your neighbour if you see fit, and that no one is necessarily going to hold you to account and push you back.

With the first war in Iraq, when they tried to invade Kuwait, there was a sense that the world would not tolerate annexation in this way. Even though the Americans went to Iraq years later, there was never a sense that Iraq would become an American state. It was not a war of annexation.

Once you start allowing that to happen, it gives other states a lot of ideas. I don't think we want to live in that world, and I think Canada has probably the most to lose as a medium-sized player in a world that doesn't have rules.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Thank you, sir.

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

**VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** The only brief observation I would make is that there's a nexus between a national defence review and a national security review, so when we discuss issues of information, misinformation, coercion and the like, that's where there's an interplay between those two processes.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Normandin, you have one minute.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

You talked about the need to increase munitions production, which is currently insufficient. We know that the government has not yet signed a contract with any companies. On the other hand, the Americans are doing it. A contract was signed in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, for example, to increase production.

Are we not being outcompeted locally?

[English]

**Dr. David Perry:** My translation is not working, but I think I caught the gist of that.

I think we have been far too slow to actually put in place real mechanisms to leverage Canadian domestic production for a whole number of things, including ammunition. We've been spending a lot of time talking about that, and we need to get contracts in place.

**VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** We also need to achieve that in the long term. We need a defence industrial policy that makes sense and has long-term projections. It's something you cannot surge. You cannot surge defence industrial capacity. It has to be planned for and paid for in an enduring way.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

Ms. Mathysen, you have one minute.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** You talked about this multi-party, non-partisan commitment moving forward, yet you're also stressing the 2%. Is it concerning to both of you that none of the party leaders in this present group has ever committed to 2% in the future?

**VAdm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** Yes.

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** I concur.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** You also said the world will not accept annexation, yet we see how that's simply not true, currently, in the Middle East.

Can you explain your commentary in relation to that?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** It's too early to tell whether annexation is the purpose, or if removal is.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Is the defence of natural resources the purpose?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** I wouldn't be able to say.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Okay, that's fine.

**A voice:** They're calling us back after suspension.

**The Chair:** Is it all right?

Okay.

Mrs. Gallant, you have two minutes.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Thank you.

With respect to the DPU, even if we purchase all the equipment today, as you said, we are still short of people to operate it. As we heard, out of 70,000 people, only 4,000 were accepted and made it through.

Have you done any studies—or are there any studies at all—that suggest there is a relationship between the implementation of DEI in our military and the resulting recruitment numbers?

• (1200)

**Dr. David Perry:** I haven't personally done research in this area. My colleague Charlotte has.

I would offer that recruiting seems to be working quite well. We're getting tens of thousands of Canadians and permanent residents interested in joining the military. We just can't get them in and employed.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Okay.

With respect to the OECD and our GDP increasing—making the contribution to NATO as a percentage even less—where do you see us getting the wisest, most effective spending completed, if we were to get serious about security in this nation and allocate the money?

**Dr. David Perry:** I would say it's in procurement and personnel reform. There's plenty of money on the table. If we could spend that more efficiently and effectively, our numbers could increase significantly. That's the most meaningful thing we could do in the short term.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** This may be for our admiral.

I understand there's been a planning group under way for a number of years with respect to submarines. Even if we made the decision, it would still take eight years to get our first submarine delivered, at best.

My question is this: Once the military is eventually given the go-ahead, how long will it take for them to even decide what we get in terms of a submarine? Then we can add eight years to that.

**The Chair:** Excuse me.

That may be an important question, but Mrs. Gallant has gone through her time, so you'll have to work in an answer at some other point.

For the final two minutes, it's Madame Lalonde.

Before I ask Madame Lalonde to do her two minutes, can you explain the lights, Mr. Clerk?

**The Clerk:** Yes.

The House was suspended and now it's back. It's just calling members back. We're all good.

**The Chair:** Okay. We don't have to worry about it.

Madame Lalonde, you have two minutes.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** Thank you very much. I'm going to try to be as quick as possible.

We heard a lot at the committee today, certainly, about the defence policy update focusing on the defence of Canada here at home. The defence policy focused a lot on the north and the Arctic. What's the significance of this, and why is this the right moment to focus on our Arctic?

Could I hear from all three of you?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** I'd give two little points.

I think the Americans are looking to us to show more leadership and vision for the Arctic, so I think it's a very good check mark for improving Canada-U.S. relations.

When it comes to communicating to Canadians the importance of spending on the military, reminding them of the great white north is pretty important.

**Dr. David Perry:** I would offer that I think it's the most pressing threat to Canada. If we want to look at where to focus, we should be focusing there more, because we're not spending enough to do everything. We should protect our own backyard first and foremost, and the Arctic is our backyard.

**Vadm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** The closest point of approach between Russia and Canada is through the north. There are contested United Nations claims for resources in the north. Our relationship with indigenous peoples, governments and communities are key in northern portions of Canada.

These are all positive reasons, in addition to what my two colleagues said.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** Very quickly, what are our NATO allies doing on NATO's northern flanks, and how can Canada meaningfully contribute?

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** It's already a big contribution to open—

**Vadm (Ret'd) Darren Hawco:** I'm sorry, Youri.

Seven of eight polar countries are NATO countries, so we are collaborating in a different and more meaningful way over time.

It's over to you, Youri.

**Dr. Youri Cormier:** I was going to say that there's a bit of a transition, and it's nice to hear from the Canadian government that there's a willingness to engage NATO in the north. We used to be much more protective of our north and did not want to share responsibilities with NATO. Presenting this as the northern and western flank of NATO is an important step in the right direction for cooperation.

**The Chair:** Madame Lalonde, you're out of time, but because I'm such a nice fellow, Mr. Perry, go ahead.

**Dr. David Perry:** I would say that at present we can do very little, since we have almost no modern military capability we can send to our north. Hopefully we'll get some soon.

**The Chair:** Thank you all, colleagues and witnesses alike.

I apologize for cutting you off at the beginning and at the end. It's pretty frustrating, given these realities we have to deal with. On behalf of the committee, I just want to thank you.

With that, we'll suspend for a minute or two for the next panel and hopefully get somewhere through our second hour. Thank you again. The meeting is suspended.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1215)

**The Chair:** This meeting has now resumed.

We have two witnesses familiar to the committee, Dr. Charron and Dr. Boutilier. We are really hard pressed on time. I'm going to ask you for just three minutes of opening remarks. I apologize for this, but it is what it is. We're in the last week of Parliament, and things happen.

With that, I'm going to ask Dr. Charron, who has been waiting patiently, if she can summarize her remarks in three minutes, and then we'll move to Dr. Boutilier. We'll have to shrink the rounds of questions as well.

Dr. Charron, please go ahead for three minutes.

**Professor Andrea Charron (Director, Centre for Defence and Security Studies, University of Manitoba, As an Individual):** Thank you for the opportunity to present to the committee.

I would like to focus my remarks on Joint Task Force North, the Canadian Rangers and, if time permits, clarification regarding multi-purpose projects, given the Arctic-focused “Our North, Strong and Free”, or ONSF.

While I disagree with the idea that Canadian sovereignty is at risk, I do agree that defence and security in the Arctic need to be assessed and that a whole-of-government approach needs to be taken.

JTFN is unique in that it is responsible for the largest geographic region of any of Canadian joint operations command's six regional joint task forces, RJTFs. However, contrary to the others, it is only a force employer, which means that any sizable military activity conducted in the north requires troops and equipment to be force-generated from the south. Unlike the Canadian army divisions or RJTFs that have the benefit of being able to pick from large pools of members of all ranks, JTFN's main headquarters in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, and its two detachments in Whitehorse, Yukon territory, and Iqaluit, Nunavut, have fewer than 100 defence team members.

These locations are considered isolated posts, which makes recruitment challenging. Northern premiers have all identified the need for careers and opportunities for northerners. All files for northern applicants for the CAF should be prioritized.

Public affairs capacity is critical in the Arctic. JTFN should have a team of four. However, as of last week, it had only one photographer. Images without properly aligned messaging will not adequately articulate the Government of Canada's intentions.

JTFN is also a low priority for staffing, with critical gaps across the headquarters. Approximately 35% of its middle manager, junior officer and senior NCO positions are vacant. This is 15% more than the national average. Consider that they are trying to coordinate Operation Nanook's year-round activities and engagements with other government departments, our allies, indigenous governments and designated individuals. If the Government of Canada could do one thing that would benefit the entire government, resourcing to accelerate security clearances might be that one thing.

Let's turn to the Canadian Rangers. They are vital to the Arctic. That they are not combat capable does not take away from their incredible contribution. They are the eyes and the ears in the Arctic, but they need to be resourced with additional administrative personnel in their Yellowknife headquarters. Red tape on reimbursing Rangers for claims against the Crown is still overly bureaucratic.

Finally, I strongly urge the government to consider and articulate clearly what "multi-purpose" and "dual use" mean for Canadians in an Arctic context. For example, the announcements of northern operational support hubs, NOSHs, are very unclear as to purpose and function, and we're not sure what ends they will serve. They have not been the subject of a systematic assessment to identify the capacities that will contribute to operational support in the north.

The CAF is not mandated to address the housing, medical services and other vital deficits in the Arctic, but more personnel in the Arctic will put a greater strain on communities. I think now is the time for the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Northern Affairs, the Minister of Transport and other Arctic responsibilities to work in an integrated fashion to optimize the effects of public expenditure.

• (1220)

**The Chair:** Thank you Dr. Charron.

Dr. Boutilier, you have three minutes, please.

**Dr. James Boutilier (Professor, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr Chair.

Let me commend you and your colleagues for this exercise. It's vitally important.

I had a number of points. Let me jettison most of them and make just a few in the two minutes that are left to me.

I would suggest, without risk of being exceedingly blunt and rude, that we have become, sadly, a nation of sleepwalkers when it comes to defence. We're naive, we're complacent and we're entitled. It's a state of affairs that is compounded by the abject failure of successive Canadian governments to provide real leadership on the issue of defence.

We need some clear-eyed visions as to where the nation is going and a genuine sense of urgency. In fact, I think that was one of the messages that emerged from the earlier part of your deliberations this morning: Time after time, there is no sense of urgency.

Second, we are at war, and we should be acting and planning accordingly. In the formal notes I submitted to you, one of the issues I raise is the conjunction between war and peace. I would suggest, as outlined in the DPU to some degree, that what we have is a situation of unannounced conflict, and we should be acting accordingly as a nation.

The DPU to me is a profound embarrassment. It's a hastily contrived Liberal Party electoral document full of truths, half-truths and promises that, frankly, will probably never be fulfilled. It is a profoundly unsatisfactory statement.

With regard to Arctic defence, I deeply appreciate the professionalism and knowledge of Professor Charron. In my estimation, Arctic defence is a national fantasy. It's convenient and it's logical in terms of our sovereignty, but it's a fallback position. It's one to which, in point of fact, we provide lamentably few resources.

We're in a race against time. If you are not ready, we'll lose. I draw your attention to the huge array of inquiries that have been made and the commentaries on the state of Canadian defence. This is a true national crisis. It's not sufficient to simply collect information and debate. We need genuine action. It will take a decade to begin to turn this situation around.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1225)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Boutilier.

Again, the bells are going to start at 12:33. If I get 15 minutes by unanimous consent, we can run this to 12:48.

Do I have unanimous consent to continue through the bells?

**Mr. James Bezan:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** That still means we're going to have to cut back time to three minutes in the first round.

Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, because of how constrained things are getting here, I think it's unfair to our witnesses that we're cutting back on their time, especially since they've had to cut back on their testimony. I don't think that's fair.

I move the following motion, for which I gave notice last Monday:

Given the large workload the committee has on the docket, the committee instructs the chair to book five meetings over the months of July 8 and September 13, to deal with unfinished business, such as the RCAF pilot recruitment, training, and retention and other pressing matters as they emerge.

May I speak to that motion?

**The Chair:** You may. It's in order, unfortunately.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we are dealing with this DPU, today has turned into a rushed day. We know that we'll probably lose the meeting on Wednesday with the visit of NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg. We have the DPU study that we want to dive into.

We have a housing crisis. It was mentioned in our last panel that we're short 6,700 residential housing units, yet there's no money in the budget to back up the building of new houses for our troops. We have a housing study that we should be completing and getting tabled to provide insight to the government. We have a transparency study that we're also working on that needs to be dealt with. We have stories of our troops who are living unsheltered, living rough. We have stories of our military families having to go to food banks.

Through all this, we have this huge recruitment crisis. I have another motion that I tabled last week that we'll deal with at another time. We're facing a pilot shortage, especially with our fighter pilots. We don't have enough to fight and to fly the old aircraft we have, never mind the F-35s that will be coming on stream.

Mr. Chair, I don't think we need a lot of debate on this. I ask colleagues here to support this motion and to take time out of their summer to come back to Ottawa and allow us to put together policy that will help our Canadian Armed Forces and put together policy that will provide better resources to those brave women and men who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I think the way we can do that is by having a few more meetings. I don't think five meetings out of our summer is a big ask. I would ask colleagues to support this.

**The Chair:** Is there any debate?

Go ahead, Ms. Lalonde.

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde:** I won't debate, I'm just going to say it's very interesting that this particular member has wasted time twice throughout the past two hours.

I would call the vote.

**The Chair:** All those in favour of the motion?

(Motion negatived)

**The Chair:** Mr. Bezan, you have—

**Mr. James Bezan:** Three minutes.

**The Chair:** Two and a half.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Thank you.

I want to thank both of our witnesses. I apologize that you're not going to get the amount of time you deserve to put your concerns on.... We could have had more meetings to actually dive deeper into what you're saying.

I'm going to start with you, Dr. Boutilier. You were unequivocal and you pulled no punches in your criticism of the defence policy update. You're also quite well known for your advocacy for a strong Royal Canadian Navy.

Can you speak to the fact that all the DPU talks about is exploring the importance of replacing our Victoria-class submarines and what Canada should be doing right now to get the underwater capabilities we need to defend our coastlines and work with our allies?

**Dr. James Boutilier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bezan. I certainly appreciate your question.

The DPU does refer, in a brief passage of half a dozen lines, to some specific requirements with respect to underwater sensors and so forth in the Arctic and elsewhere on the Canadian coastline. That's one issue on which the DPU is uncharacteristically specific.

With respect to submarines, this is a national tragedy. Submarines are the coin of the realm, and we should be moving with enormous rapidity and commitment to address this issue. What we have to think about, without risking getting into a long dissertation on submarines, is the colossal distances that separate us from the areas in which we're likely to be operational. From Victoria to the western Arctic is 4,500 miles, the same distance that Victoria is from Tokyo.

The talk about conventional submarines, I think, is in many ways misplaced. We should, in fact, be going down the nuclear route. I realize there is a long legacy of nuclear submarines in the Canadian experience, but if you wish to proceed undetected, at speed, and to have the endurance to perform in the Arctic or elsewhere, this is the sort of submarine we need. We will have to buy it in collaboration with the Americans and the Brits in the way the Australians have done.

This is a matter of enormous urgency. A navy without this capacity in this day and age, when there are over 200 submarines operational in the Indo-Pacific, is a navy that is in fact operating with only half of the force it should have available.

Thank you.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Dr. Boutilier. I think it's Mr. Collins now.

You have three minutes. Go ahead, please.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Dr. Charron, you caught my attention immediately with your opening statement when you said that you didn't believe Canadian sovereignty was at risk. Did I hear you correctly, and can you expand upon that?

**Prof. Andrea Charron:** Yes.

We're talking about de jure sovereignty. Nobody is arguing that the Arctic is not Canadian. Even if we have Russian bombers that are in the Canadian air defence identification zone, that's still international airspace. That is not losing our sovereignty. I think the problem with using a term like "sovereignty" is that we aren't talking about discussions of how we detect threats, how we defeat threats and how we make sure the whole of government is integrating its efforts.

The fact is that sovereignty can be used by anybody to be a short form for "I have a concern I can't articulate, but let me use sovereignty," rather than talking about the issues that need to be addressed.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Why, then, do you believe that now's the time? Even though to your mind it may not be related to sovereignty, why is now the time to invest in the Arctic?

**Prof. Andrea Charron:** I've been arguing for a decade that we need to invest. I do a lot of research on NORAD, and the NORAD modernization and continental defence projects are going to be essential.

We are in an era of deterrence by denial, which means we need to be able to get a common operating picture that can be shared securely with all of the necessary partners to understand what is happening, and that's not going to happen unless the NORAD modernization projects, the satellites and the land-based and sea-based sensors, are in place, connected, and protected, and we start to consider the defence of North America as a wider contribution to NATO in general.

**Mr. Chad Collins:** Thanks.

You talked about the great strains that will come to communities in the north in relation to investing \$15.6 billion specifically in infrastructure. We think about all of the roads that need to go in and the housing that needs to be constructed in order to have a greater presence in the north. All of those investments need to happen in consultation, as you highlighted, with our partners and other stakeholders, including first nations and our provincial and territorial partners.

Can you talk about how that happens and about the importance of having those conversations ahead of those investments?

**Prof. Andrea Charron:** When it comes to the indigenous governments, especially the Inuit, we're talking about rights holders, so they absolutely have to be at the table: It's nothing about them without them.

This is where Joint Task Force North is so essential. They are the connectors for the Government of Canada to indigenous governments and to other government departments, and with the increased tempo of activity that's happening in the Arctic, they need more resources to be able to make those connections so that consultations are significant and not ad hoc and after the fact.

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

Madame Normandin is next, for three minutes, please.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you very much.

My questions are mainly for Mr. Boutilier.

In the first part of the meeting, we were told that, starting in 2029, there would probably be—

[*English*]

**Dr. James Boutilier:** Pardon me. I am sorry to interrupt you. Is there a translation available?

**The Clerk:** Dr. Boutilier, this is the clerk speaking to you.

If you go to the bottom of your Zoom screen, there should be a globe that you choose for interpretation. If you choose English, it will give you the interpretation there.

**Dr. James Boutilier:** Thank you so very much, Andrew.

I apologize.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** No problem.

Can you hear the interpretation now?

[*English*]

**Dr. James Boutilier:** Yes. I can hear you now.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** That's wonderful.

My questions are mainly for you, Mr. Boutilier.

In the first part of the meeting, we were told that we can expect a decrease in military spending starting in 2029, as well as a decrease in the percentage of gross domestic product spent on national defence. This decrease would stem from the expiration of commitments made under the defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged".

Do you agree with that analysis?

What message does the fact that we will not be able to achieve, in the long term, the objectives we had committed to with our NATO partners send?

[*English*]

**Dr. James Boutilier:** Thank you very much for that question.

I apologize for not replying to you

[*Translation*]

in French.

[*English*]

To begin with, we have a lamentable inclination to freeloader on our structural or institutional arrangements, particularly with the United States, and that, I would suggest, is a strategy that is rapidly becoming endangered. Americans have significant challenges of their own in order to meet the defence demands of a global power.

Second, I would suggest that all the evidence suggests that what we're looking at is a declining level of vitality in the Canadian economy.

Third, at the very moment that we might begin to turn the corner—and there are some who would suggest that the decline in armed forces is so profound that it is incapable of being reversed—there are some who would suggest that at the very moment we begin to make real inroads in the deficits that successive governments have left us, we will in fact find ourselves without sufficient revenue to continue in the way that we were before. If you look, for example, at standards of living, we've fallen from fifth to 33rd globally. This is all a warning sign of our lack of competitiveness moving forward.

National defence is in real trouble, but it will be in even greater trouble if we don't move with enormous rapidity and urgency now.

**The Chair:** You have only about 15 seconds left.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** I will be brief, Mr. Chair.

The operating and maintenance budget has been cut by \$1 billion.

Could we afford to make those cuts? Can we still afford them?

[English]

**Dr. James Boutillier:** No, we cannot maintain these. We're in a state of complete delusion and self-congratulation about our performance.

At the onset of the conflict in Ukraine, we had more than 80 tanks, but as a point of fact, probably fewer than 20 of them were actually available for service. The same is true across a whole array of equipment in the Canadian Forces. There's a lack of spares, a lack of personnel, a lack of—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, Dr. Boutillier, we're going to have to leave Madame Normandin's questions there.

Ms. Mathysen, you have three minutes.

**Dr. James Boutillier:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Professor Charron, when you appeared for our Arctic security study, we spoke about the balance of confronting hostile states and yet still maintaining diplomatic international agreements and relations. We spoke about calling out Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and sanctioning them, and then holding them within institutions like the Arctic Council. We talked about that collaboration and those challenges.

Last week Minister Joly spoke about our approach to the Arctic. She spoke about the challenges of how those hostilities are making a change.

Could you speak to how that's changed since we heard from you on that study, and how those changes have impacted things like the Arctic Council and our ability to continue in the international space and security space?

• (1240)

**Prof. Andrea Charron:** In the case of the Arctic Council, the working groups have decided that they will proceed, but it will be online.

One of the major concerns, of course, is that Russia has the largest Arctic territory. We're seriously concerned that we do not have access to their data that speaks to how much methane is being released from permafrost that is melting, which is going to change the world's weather and climate change values. It's essential that we still work with scientists and work through diplomatic channels to make sure that we get that information.

This does not excuse their atrocious behaviour, but we don't want to cut off our nose to spite our face. There are areas in which we absolutely must work with Russia. Again, that is not to say that we accept their egregious behaviour, but at some point, we are going to have to find a way to get these sorts of information, because doing otherwise is going to damage us.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Okay.

We're also in the middle of a study on space defence. Similar to the Arctic, we're seeing commercialization in space. I have concerns about that, given the observations on the necessity of diplomatic operations and the fact that we are potentially cutting our nose off to spite our face.

What do you suggest for the spaces we talk about—Russia, China and Iran—and those really complicated situations?

**Prof. Andrea Charron:** You know, it is, and this is why having global affairs is—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Dr. Charron. Unfortunately, you've been left 13 seconds to respond to that complicated situation.

I'm going to be a little arbitrary here. We have to rise at 12:50. My thought is having a one-minute round for each party and then calling it a day. Is that acceptable or otherwise?

Mr. Allison, you have one minute.

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC):** All right. Thank you, I think, Mr. Chair. I'm not sure.

Dr. Boutillier, you talked about it being a bit of a fantasy that we could ever hit some of these targets. When it comes to the defence of our Arctic, just very quickly, in the 45 seconds you have, what should we be prioritizing right now? Give us two or three things to start to do this rebuild.

**Dr. James Boutillier:** Personnel and equipment are the two things you have to move forward with, and with lightning speed. We are 10 years behind the curve because of a dithering delay, and this is what we have to do. Only with those can we even begin to contemplate having a real presence in the Arctic.

**Mr. Dean Allison:** Okay.

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

Ms. Lambropoulos, you have one minute.

**Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank our witnesses.

Ms. Charron, this question is for you. You spoke about the Rangers and the need to invest more in administrative personnel in order to help them increase their capacity and capabilities. I'm wondering if you could speak a bit more about the importance of that. It's not the first time we've heard that in this committee.

**Prof. Andrea Charron:** They are the eyes and ears in the Arctic. I'll note that with any incursion that has happened in the Arctic, including submarines, it's been the locals who have noted it and brought it to the attention of the Government of Canada.

We want them to be out on the land, being those eyes and ears, not trying to struggle with PDF versions, wonky Internet, filling out complicated forms again and again and again, and then waiting for months for reimbursement. In most cases, they use their own equipment. You can imagine that if a snowmobile, for example, is damaged, that doesn't mean that it's only the Rangers who can't use it: It also means their family can't use it and the community can't use it.

We really need to have northern-appropriate responses to dealing with these administrative burdens.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Lambropoulos.

You have one minute, Madame Normandin.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** Thank you.

Mr. Boutilier, it took two years for Canada to come up with a new defence policy. According to that policy, Canada is going to explore the possibility of buying major equipment, such as submarines.

Would it have been better to say nothing, rather than to appear not credible as to our intentions?

• (1245)

[*English*]

**Dr. James Boutilier:** I'm terribly sorry. Your translation didn't come through at all. I apologize.

**The Chair:** Are you still on the English translation, Dr. Boutilier?

**Dr. James Boutilier:** I am indeed.

**The Chair:** Let's go at that again.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Normandin:** It took nearly two years for Canada to come up with a new defence policy, which talks about the possibility of exploring the idea of buying major equipment, such as submarines.

Would it have been better to say nothing about it, rather than to appear not credible as to our intentions on these acquisitions?

[*English*]

**Dr. James Boutilier:** It is a profoundly disappointing document. It's a Hail Mary effort by the Liberal Party, suddenly panicked by the realization that so many Canadians now consider defence and security an electoral issue, to address the shortcomings in defence. Much of it is not worth the paper it's written on, because it's pitched 10 or 15 years into the future.

I would say in conclusion that one of the things that concerns me about the committee is the partisanship. Use the Australian model, which is bipartisan. You have to move ahead as an entire nation.

In terms of the DPU, it would have been far better to have thought the thing through rather than to have rushed it out as part of the whole electoral process. It's deeply unsatisfactory.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

Ms. Mathysen, you have the final minute.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Mr. Boutilier, in June 2022 you wrote, "Canada is a nation adrift in the Indo-Pacific, and that needs to change". The government came out with the IPS, but it has changed since then. The government recognized foreign interference from Modi's government, but the DPU also brought a smaller focus on the Pacific region.

Looking back on that in terms of the last two years, how do you think Canada should approach the region differently?

**Dr. James Boutilier:** If we're talking about the Indo-Pacific region, when I wrote a critique of that, I suggested that it was aspirational and ambitious but 40 years late. In fact, we have come to the Indo-Pacific after the action has largely taken place. If we're having challenges meeting our responsibilities in NATO, we are in no position to fulfill our responsibilities in the Indo-Pacific, much to my deep regret. We should be in a position to do so if we find ourselves drawn in the future into supporting, for example, American operations in the region.

We have a huge deficit to make up simply reputationally in the region, let alone in terms of our capacity. The IPS dedicated us to moving ships into the region, but the navy will be at extreme difficulty in terms of sustaining that over the next half-decade.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Unfortunately, that brings our time to a close. I want to thank both of you for your patience. This is an unsatisfactory way to deal with an important policy document, but it is what it is and we are in the time we are.

Before I bring the gavel down, I want to note that this is the final time that Mr. Fillmore will be with us, and I want to thank him for his contribution to the committee. He may not be mayor yet, but he is resigning.

Thank you, Andy. You've been a real trouper and a real contributor to the committee, so thank you and good luck wherever your political aspirations go.

• (1250)

**Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair, and thanks to the members for having me.

**The Chair:** With that, the meeting is adjourned.

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