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Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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• (1550)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): Welcome to the defence committee. In particular, I'd like to welcome Minister Sajjan; deputy minister John Forster; Chief of the Defence Staff Jonathan Vance; and other military members and departmental officials, to talk to us today about the new defence policy.

I believe that the minister has eight to 10 minutes' worth of opening remarks. Then we'll proceed with formal questioning and everyone will get a chance to ask the minister and departmental officials questions about the new defence policy.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence): Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity to meet with you and committee members once again. It is my distinct pleasure to provide a brief overview of our new defence policy—"Strong, Secure, Engaged". The Government of Canada is committed to keeping Canada strong at home, secure in North America, and engaged in the world.

First, I'd like to thank the committee for its efforts to contribute to and support the development of our new defence policy. In particular, the information and recommendations in your fall 2016 report on Canada's participation in NORAD and the defence of North America were extremely helpful. I also want to thank you for your most recent report, "The Readiness of Canada's Naval Forces", which I look forward to reviewing and responding to in due course.

The parliamentary engagement in our new defence policy was part of our most comprehensive consultation exercise ever conducted on defence and security issues, and Canadians certainly had a lot to say, providing over 20,000 public submissions. That does not include the more than 4,700 participants who contributed comments online, or the many more who participated in nine expert round table discussions held across the country. We also spoke with our allies and partners, many of whom had recently updated their own defence policies and were able to share their experiences.

I suspect that we heard similar things to them during our respective consultations. For one thing, we heard that the Canadian Armed Forces has long been underfunded and under-resourced. We expect that our allies were told the same about their respective militaries. As you know from your work on this issue, the status quo spending on defence is insufficient to maintain the current capability.

Your observations regarding the global security environment and aerospace threats to North America, the requirements to modernize NORAD to meet evolving threats, and the importance of strengthening the Royal Canadian Air Force were all very timely.

Since I began as Minister of National Defence, I've been clear that my first priority is that our women and men in uniform deliver on the vision set out in "Strong, Secure, Engaged". We will grow the size of the regular force by 3,500, to 71,500 personnel; and increase the reserve force by 1,500, to 30,000. We will also hire an additional 1,150 civilians in the Department of National Defence to support them. We are improving how we recruit and have put in place targeted initiatives to attract, enrol, and retain women and men who reflect the diversity of Canadians.

The members of the Canadian Armed Forces are proud to serve their country, and we deploy them to difficult and dangerous environments. We have a duty of care to our women and men in uniform, and we are committed to improving the assistance, services, and care we provide them, and to their families as well, for the duration of their careers as they transition to post-military life. They deserve nothing less.

Our new defence policy will keep Canada strong at home, secure in North America, and engaged in the world. Being strong at home is about ensuring the safety and security of the Canadian people, which is our top priority. The Canadian Armed Forces will monitor the approaches to Canada and have high-readiness assets available at all times to respond if potential threats are detected. We will detect, deter, and defend against threats to, or attacks against, Canada. The forces will also develop and maintain a robust capacity to respond concurrently to multiple domestic emergencies when called upon in support of civilian authorities. We will ensure that our search and rescue crews, who assist thousands of people in distress every year, have the resources they require to help Canadians when called upon.

Being secure in North America means that we will be active in a modern, continental defence partnership with the United States. The policy pledges us to work closely with our neighbour to modernize NORAD to meet the threats in an evolving security environment. This includes continued co-operation in renewing the north warning system, on which we are already collaborating with the U.S. To further protect North America, the policy commits to expanded aerospace and maritime domain awareness and control, and to taking an all-perils' approach to protecting against the full range of air and maritime threats.

Being engaged in the world means that the Canadian Armed Forces is well-equipped to contribute to a more stable, peaceful world. As Minister Freeland noted when unveiling our new foreign policy priorities, it would not be in Canada's interest to leave world peace and stability to the great powers to settle among themselves.

• (1555)

Our policy will prepare the Canadian Armed Forces to advance Canadian international security objectives, from conducting expeditionary operations to engaging in capacity-building with partners, and to support our allies where our shared interests are at stake.

At all times, Canadian engagement will be guided by the Canadian values of inclusion, compassion, accountable government, and respect for diversity and human rights. We will pursue leadership roles and will prioritize interoperability in planning and capability development to ensure seamless cooperation with allies and partners, particularly with NATO. We will be a responsible international actor, including through participation in United Nations peace operations.

Key to achieving that is providing our people with the tools they need to get the job done. In your report you identified an urgent need to move ahead with the recapitalization of the Royal Canadian Air Force. Our new policy outlines numerous projects that will result in greater air power. For example, we will acquire 88 advanced fighters to replace the CF-18 fleet, through an open, fair, and transparent competition. This will help ensure Canada's long-term relevance in the future security environment and help us to meet our NORAD and NATO commitments simultaneously. However, air power means more than just fighters, and we intend to provide the air force with the resources it needs to take on all assignments.

Your report called for airlift capability, which is essential to our ability to operate when and where we are needed. As such, the Globemaster and the Hercules fleet will be sustained and our utility transports, the Twin Otters, will be overhauled and their life cycle extended until at least 2025. A replacement project is also planned to ensure the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to operate in the north over the long term.

Canada's utility tactical transport helicopter provides tactical airlift to soldiers and helps with the rescue of civilians in the High Arctic and offers support during natural disasters. We will ensure its reliability through a platform life extension, in addition to planned modification under the CH-146 optimized weapons system support contract, valued at \$640 million over 10 years. We will also dedicate additional personnel to better leverage the exceptional information gathered by the sensor suite of the CP-140 Aurora, and support capabilities such as air-to-air refuelling by the CC-150 Polaris, and

we will eventually purchase new replacements as well. These capabilities will be critical to the success of the Royal Canadian Air Force for many years to come.

Our new policy is ambitious. However, it is also the most rigorously costed defence policy in Canada's history. It is backed up by a commitment to sufficient and long-term predictable funding. This policy will increase the annual defence budget by more than 70%, from \$18.9 billion to \$32.7 billion by 2026-27. It also includes new defence funding of \$62.3 billion over 20 years from today's budget.

As I've stated previously, I do not believe that the level of defence spending as a percentage of GDP tells the whole story with regard to our actual contribution. Canada has consistently shown that it is ready to step up when it matters. However, "Strong, Secure, Engaged" will see Canada's defence spending reach 1.4% of GDP by 2024-25. Of that, almost one third will be spent on capital projects, exceeding the NATO target by more than 60%. Whenever duty calls, Canada's military will have the means to take on the task, whether that involves enforcing our sovereignty, monitoring our approaches, supporting diplomacy, delivering humanitarian aid and disaster relief, enhancing capacity building, or strengthening global peace.

I'm very proud of "Strong, Secure, Engaged" and would be pleased to talk about any aspects of our new defence policy.

I welcome your questions.

Thank you.

• (1600)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

The minister has agreed to stay for the two formal rounds of questioning so that everyone will get to ask their questions. To keep everybody on track who is asking or answering questions, I will signal when you have 30 seconds left so that you can sum up your remarks before I move on to the next person.

I will yield the floor to Mark Gerretsen for our first seven-minute question.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much, Chair.

Minister, thank you for taking the time to come to speak with us today. I appreciate your comments thus far. I can tell you, from representing a community with a military presence, CFB Kingston, there are a lot of good discussions going on about the new defence policy review. Members of the community are excited to see how it will roll out.

One specific topic I want to discuss with you is the fact that post-traumatic stress disorder is becoming more and more common—at least the willingness in the military to discuss it. It's obviously something that has affected our military personnel forever, I guess you could say. The increasing discussion of it now and people's willingness to talk about their particular struggles is making post-traumatic stress disorder a more and more predominant topic in the overall discussions of the health of our men and women in uniform.

Can you elaborate on some of the initiatives that will help focus specifically on those who are suffering from PTSD?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, I would like to say that this defence policy focuses on our members, making sure that we invest early, from the time they enrol, and making sure that we look at providing the investments and the tools necessary so that we can prevent and build resilience, whether it's mental or physical support that's needed. That's the real core emphasis of this policy, to invest early and to build that resilience. In case they are injured, and it's needed, we're making sure that we'll be working very closely with Veterans Affairs on this. We have the transition group that's going to be created to make sure that we also look after our members and that they have all the supports necessary.

Chief, do you want to add anything further to that?

General Jonathan Vance (Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence): Thanks, Minister.

It's a matter of significant concern for us, obviously, and anybody who's injured needs to be cared for. You're right, it's becoming more prevalent in the discussion, which is a good thing. It's important that mental health in general be something that people can talk about and that we, first and foremost, eliminate barriers to discussion and barriers to care. That's job one, and we're doing that in a variety of ways by talking about it and encouraging people to talk about it.

The surgeon general has been very clear, as have I, that mental health is something that you can recover from, deal with, get better from, manage in your life, and still have a successful career. There are some cases, just like physical cases, in which you are debilitated to a point where you may not be able to serve, but you still, as the minister says, need to be able to go through an effective transition. That's one reason for that transition group.

I would also say, though, that we need more research, more science, and far more work done on diagnosis, prevention, and screening so we can understand, when someone arrives into the armed forces, if they have a lack of resilience that needs to be worked on. What do we do for resilience training? How does that work? All of that needs to be underpinned by science and evidence, and so we are working on that across the board.

• (1605)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you, General.

To follow up on that, you've addressed very adequately how you're dealing with it. One thing that might be of concern to me is that, despite the fact there's a lot more discussion about PTSD, there still is, inherent within military culture, a certain amount of a don't-ask-don't-tell kind of mentality of being worried about discussing things like this, and in particular as it might relate to mental health. Would you say that there are adequate measures in place that encourage people to come forward to talk about these particular health issues they might be encountering?

Gen Jonathan Vance: The short answer is yes.

Your premise is one that I don't entirely agree with. I think that not being open about your personal mental health challenges is prevalent within society. In fact, I think what we're seeing in the armed forces is that we're turning a corner where people ought to be—and if they're not they're encouraged to be—open and seek treatment and counselling, whatever it takes. At the front end, I think we're one of the organizations in the country that will take the notion of resilience, resilience training, and life skills and deliver those formally and professionally so that people can withstand the rigours of military service.

The fact is that it is absolutely correct to characterize the military the way you just did in the way we were. We've come from there. We want to move forward from that point. We will be dogged, I suspect, by a history in which we maybe weren't as careful in paying attention to this, but we are now, and people need to know that. That said, we still need the science to do better. We still need to be able to treat people. We need to value individuals and recognize that people recover from and manage mental health challenges.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you. That's what I was getting at, that the changes are happening and things are different now. I'm really glad to hear you confirm that.

Minister, just going back to another aspect of the defence policy review, if I read it correctly, I notice that more than \$6 million annually will be going towards military resource centres across the country.

Having seen the way the military resource centre works at CFB Kingston, I can attest to the fact that these are great resources, particularly for families of men or women who have been deployed. Quite often I think we forget about the fact that the families are going through a lot during the deployments of loved ones as well.

Can you expand on the approach you're going to be taking towards these resource centres through this additional funding?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: In fact, the defence policy focuses on members and their families. We recognize that our family members serve alongside.

The family resource centre plays an absolutely critical role in supporting our members, not only deployed members, but also regular force members who are continually being posted, making sure that we can assist them with finding doctors, finding jobs. These are the initiatives that we want to have taking place to make it easier, so that at the end of the day, when a member knows that their family is being looked after, they can be even more effective with the duties that have been assigned to them.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will turn the floor over to Mr. Bezan.

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

My question is for Minister Sajjan. Welcome to committee.

I want to concentrate on the fighter jets that you talked about in your comments as well as in the defence policy. On page 38 you talked about the interim fighter capability, but what's not talked about are the Super Hornets.

At this committee on December 1, 2016, as well as numerous times in question period—including on February 23—you said that we're buying 18 new Super Hornets. Is that statement still true?

•(1610)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We are in consultations with the U.S. government. We need to fill this gap to make sure that we can meet our NORAD and NATO commitments simultaneously, and I've said this many times.

What the focus—

Mr. James Bezan: Right, but is it going to be Super Hornets?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes, the focus is to make sure...as we, at the same time, look at replacing the entire fleet. That's one of the reasons we are committing to buying 88 fighters as well, so that—

Mr. James Bezan: Sir, you're not going to get an argument from me about buying more planes as replacements. I'm okay with that, and I think most members of Parliament are.

But are we buying Super Hornets as an interim capability solution?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: We are in consultation with the U.S. government towards that goal.

Mr. James Bezan: Are you aware, Minister, of the study that was just released by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, the interim Super Hornet survey project, in which 88% of defence experts across Canada believe that you should cancel your plan for an interim purchase of 18 Super Hornets?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I respect the findings of that group and people who have made that suggestion, but as a government, we think it's unacceptable that we are not resourcing our air force to make sure it lives up to those commitments.

Not only do we want to replace the entire fleet with the competition and invest in the legacy fleet, but we also want to make sure that we have, in the interim, the full capabilities. We want to spend the appropriate resources for the air force so that they can start fulfilling that commitment.

Mr. James Bezan: The defence experts, though, in this report emphasized that this was a politicized decision of an alleged capability gap. In the report, one person even said that it was politically created for political purposes. One expert said that if there were a true capability gap, the government wouldn't now be threatening to cancel the deal over Boeing's trade dispute with Bombardier.

Which is more important here, the trade dispute or getting the right planes for our troops?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, it would be a different story if we weren't going to be replacing the entire fleet with a full competition, and we are doing just that.

One of the additional things is to make sure we have full confidence that we can transition into a permanent fleet, and that investing in an interim capability is important. I respect their findings, but we want to go above and beyond that to making sure that we have the full confidence to be able to meet those obligations.

Mr. James Bezan: Minister, at CANSEC you stated that Boeing is no longer a trusted partner. Why?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: One of the things is that we disagree with the U.S. Department of Commerce when it comes to the process they have taken. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is currently reviewing this. Our government believes that protecting our jobs is also important. We're going through a process now, and we'll know shortly what the findings are, but we are committed to making sure that we fill this capability.

Mr. James Bezan: If they're no longer a trusted partner, why would you be pursuing the Super Hornet?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Sorry?

Mr. James Bezan: If they're no longer a trusted partner, why would we be buying Super Hornets from them?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Right now, when it comes to Boeing, we disagree with the approach they've taken against Bombardier. Having said that, we're still continuing our discussions with the U.S. government, making sure that we fill this capability gap.

Mr. James Bezan: The Prime Minister stated on numerous occasions during the last election that the government was going to use evidence-based decision-making. Now 13 former commanders of the air force have overwhelming said that the interim purchase is a bad idea. Defence experts, 88% of them, have said that the interim purchase is a bad idea. Is that enough evidence for you that it is an ill-advised decision to make the interim purchase and that you should just go immediately to the competition and replace our fighter jets?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I respect the service of the previous commanders. We are going to be launching a full competition to replace the entire fleet. Also, we have found that 65 aircraft would be unacceptable for that. But my military advice comes from the Chief of the Defence Staff, and I'd like to have him also weigh in on this.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thanks, Minister.

I can't speak to the opinions of those who are defence experts, but I'm one, too—

Mr. James Bezan: I understand that, but I'm talking about the air force.

Gen Jonathan Vance: —and I have 100,000 of them. What I would tell you is that, as the minister has said, the option for the Super Hornet is still open. They're a bad partner now. Maybe they would become a good partner again.

I'd like to state on the record, though, to make it very plain to you and to the chair, the problem around the capability gap is a function of the fact that inherent in the defence policy is a commitment to our being able to conduct operations globally against the emerging threats that we face. It is inconceivable—

•(1615)

Mr. James Bezan: I appreciate that, General, but I only have so much time—

Gen Jonathan Vance: Yes, I know, but you've asked the question

Mr. James Bezan: I know.

Gen Jonathan Vance: —and, Mr. Chair, I think I deserve to answer the question.

Mr. James Bezan: I have one more question I want to ask the minister, and I'm going to run out of time if I don't. And I appreciate

The Chair: Perhaps one of our members can pick up the question

Gen Jonathan Vance: Okay.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you.

The Chair: —but it is Mr. Bezan's time, and he can definitely use his time.

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

Minister, if you look at what other states, other countries, are doing in their recent procurements to replace their tactical fighters, none of them are taking five years to complete their competition. If you look right now, Denmark is doing theirs in two years, Belgium means to complete theirs right now in 18 months, and just earlier this week, Finland started their F-18 replacement program and plan to have their first deliveries in 2021 and the entire fleet replaced by 2025, which coincidentally is the same time that our life extension for our CF-18s runs out.

Why wouldn't the government want to go immediately to an open competition to replace all of our jets and buy the 88 that you've said in your defence policy that you need?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: As I said, as soon as the defence policy was launched, we would be starting work on this. In fact, we have our officials at the Paris Air Show moving ahead with this as we speak.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to turn the floor over to Mr. Garrison.

You have the floor.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister for being here today.

The New Democrats were happy to see that the defence review was set in the context of a foreign policy statement as well, but on both of these statements, I have a question about resources. We saw no increase in the foreign aid budget or diplomacy budget. While there were very large numbers kicked on the military, most of those numbers are far down the road and are for equipment purchases. When you talk about fixing defence in the review, I looked at the

short term, and what we see is that the funding for the Canadian military, even under your proposed things, certainly does not keep pace with the rate of inflation from where military spending was in 2012. Even if we start with 2016-17, it will barely keep pace with inflation over the next four years, or up to and through the next election.

My question really is: since the Canadian military is being asked to do more things—we're talking on the mission in Latvia, we have a potential peacekeeping mission, and we've talked about several other training missions that Canada might be involved in—how can the Canadian military be expected to keep up this pace of operations when they have no new real dollars in their operational budget this year or next year?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I respectfully disagree. In fact, actually, there was an increase in the budget of 3%, of over \$600 million.

Mr. Randall Garrison: But 3% is the rate of inflation.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: If you look on page 43, and also at my previous statements, I've stated that even 3% was not enough. That's why we're investing significantly in addition to that, some \$62.3 billion over the next 20 years. The investment is starting now. There's additional investment to come. On page 43, it outlines the increase in defence spending.

Deputy Minister, do you want to go over the details of that?

Mr. John Forster (Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence): Sure. There is \$62 billion in new money over and above planned increases, which include the 3% the minister referred to. Even starting this year, there's \$600 million coming on top of what was already planned in the defence budget. In the first five years, there's \$6 billion in new cash.

Mr. Randall Garrison: So where is that \$600 million? Will it be in the supplementary estimates?

Mr. John Forster: Yes, it will be in the supplementary estimates this fall.

Mr. Randall Garrison: In the supplementary estimates. Okay. That's good news, but it hasn't been anywhere in any of the stuff that has been presented to us.

Mr. John Forster: Because the policy came after the budget and after the main estimates, the normal process is that we would come to committee in the supplementary estimates to request the additional funding.

One last point is that, as I said, there's \$6 billion over the first five years. In Defence, you need to ramp that up at a moderate, reasonable pace. There's no point in putting huge amounts in the first year if you're not going to be able to ramp up the capability, hire the staff, and recruit more military members. There is a planned schedule of implementation that's behind those numbers.

Mr. Randall Garrison: With respect, if we're having supplementary estimates sometime in the fall, then it's going to be quite a while before this money gets out the door.

One of the other things in the defence review discusses what I would call “providing a Canadian military that reflects the Canadian population”. I applaud the government for its goals, but we had the Auditor General say last fall that his office couldn’t find any evidence of very specific plans to reach those targets, whether in regard to women in the military, or aboriginal people, or visible minorities.

We asked you in the estimates debate if you would table those policies, and you said that you would when they were fully developed. Now today you said in your opening statement that we “have put in place targeted initiatives to attract, enrol, and retain women and men who reflect the diversity of Canadians.”

What are those targeted initiatives, and will you table those with this committee so we can see that the initiatives actually exist and there are resources behind them?

• (1620)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I’ll get the chief to answer that question, but for the Canadian Armed Forces to be able to recruit, attract, and retain personnel, they require the resources given to them. The defence policy now provides that solid commitment to the Canadian Armed Forces—

Mr. Randall Garrison: So there are new resources?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: —and the predictable, sustainable funding to be able to do this.

Chief, do you want to add to it?

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thanks, Minister.

Perhaps when I’m done, I can give a little bit of time to the chief of military personnel, General Lamarre, who is here.

We have a number of initiatives, as the minister said. Most of them are done under my orders in terms of direction and intent. The policy states the policy intent, and we are in the process and will continue to be in the process of drafting plans.

For example, Operation Honour is an initiative to alter the culture of the armed forces so there is a recognized requirement to create conditions in the armed forces that women, whether they are in or are interested in joining us, would find the forces welcoming and inclusive. That’s an initiative.

My direction to increase the recruiting of women by 1% per year has been done. We are now recruiting more women annually, and the numbers are up this year. We have more diversity in recruiting right now this year. This is a direction to my chief of military personnel to do things.

There are other things. There’s targeted early recruitment into the Royal Military College, so we have early spotting of good candidates and we go out and make them early offers like other great universities do.

Chuck, is there anything else you want to add?

Mr. Randall Garrison: So you have the resources?

Gen Jonathan Vance: We do.

Lieutenant-General Charles Lamarre (Commander Military Personnel Command , Department of National Defence): We have the resources.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Are those in the existing budget, or are they in the supplementary estimates that we’re waiting for in the fall.

Gen Jonathan Vance: We have sufficient resources now to do the plans. As the supplementary estimates come and the new money comes, we will be increasing the recruiting to grow the size of the force.

I can tell you that I’m far more concerned and consumed right now with being able to spend the supply than I am with the supply itself, so I am moving out hard to make certain we can do that.

LGen Charles Lamarre: Thanks very much.

With the announcement of the policy, the CDS gave us clear direction, which we in turn within the military personnel recruiting group have put out into a planning cycle. We will have a very specific operation that will look at reducing the recruiting time from wherever it is right now to approximately 30 days from the time that an individual indicates their interest to their coming forward so we can process them very quickly. That was in the policy, and we have that mandate.

We also have, of course, the mandate to look for the specific “targeted populations” we need to do that. I use that terminology to say that we’re looking to increase our diversity. Specifically, all the advertising campaigns, all the reaching out through social media, all the making sure we can reach out to the folks that might be interested will be geared towards the way they communicate and the way they are interested in being communicated with. I think that from looking at that, we will have accelerated processes that can bring them in rapidly.

We will be hiring 40 more case managers in the next year specifically to handle the recruit files. We are increasing the amount of resources and number of instructors at our leadership recruit school, which has to process and give the recruits basic training, to make sure we can actually do that throughput to meet the targets we have in front of us.

The Chair: That’s your time, Mr. Garrison. I’m going to have to yield the floor to Mr. Fisher for seven minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister, for being here. I always appreciate your feedback in response to our questions. Congratulations on releasing the departmental performance report.

Operational stress injuries, mental health issues, and post-traumatic stress disorder have emerged as a scourge for members of our Canadian Armed Forces and, very importantly, their families. I appreciate the fact that the DPR speaks to that, especially as these issues seem to have slipped between the cushions of the couch for years. We haven’t focused on the fact that these issues really do affect families as well. Our men and women who have served have sacrificed so much in defence of this country that I feel it’s important that we do everything to provide them with the appropriate care.

Mr. Garrison touched on this, but in my riding this a huge, huge issue. I've hosted two mental health town halls in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, with plans to do a series more. They're very well attended, and the responses and suggestions we get are very thoughtful and helpful, albeit there is a lot of concern. Mr. Garrison talked about the fact that people are now talking about this more. I think it's imperative for us to encourage that, and I'm glad to hear General Vance say that they encourage that in the military.

Can you update us on specifically what the new defence policy will do to provide care and support for our military members as far as mental health goes?

• (1625)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Before I pass to the chief for further details, I would say that this is one of the reasons that we focused on this in the defence policy. The main focus is on our personnel because the town halls and online discussions were focused on making sure that we look after our Canadian Armed Forces personnel, number one. That was the number one ask of Canadians. That's one reason that we have focused the defence policy on this. But it also requires that we not just put the money in place, but also make sure that we have enough members as well, because with all the commitments that we ask of our members, making sure that we actually have enough personnel is the reason that we're growing the forces well and focusing on other initiatives that look after the members' families, whether it's on base, or on postings.

For any further details, I'll pass it over to the chief.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thank you, Minister.

Specifically, we're going to grow the size of the medical branch so there is more first-line care for people on bases, on deployment. We will have more capacity to treat people forward—the best place to deal with the beginning of a mental health challenge—as well as taking care of them at home and, as importantly, invest in mental health care through the process of transition out of the armed forces.

People leaving the armed forces in the past have gone through a bureaucratic process that was essentially designed to get them out and move them on. We need to professionalize that. I've spoken about this before. People will go not only through detailed health screenings, but we will make certain that if there are residual mental health injuries that need to be dealt with—that is a hot hand-off—those people will be properly cared for.

At the same time, because the armed forces will grow, we will have more room to retain people inside the armed forces for longer periods of time if they are dealing with a long-term injury. That way, there's a better chance that we will be able to treat them, help them recover, and perhaps they'll go back to duty inside the armed forces.

At this juncture, our timelines to release someone on what we call a “permanent category”, with their being permanently disabled, need to change. So if someone will take longer than what we've prescribed right now, but they will recover, maybe we'll give them more time.

We have a suicide prevention strategy. We have a mental health strategy. We're going to ensure that all of what we do, including transition, deployment support, and redeployment support, includes the families, because family mental health is very important. Money

is going to be assigned to great research through Status of Women grants on family violence and gender-based violence.

All of this will combine with a concerted effort to alter the structure of a member's career path, so it doesn't become an overriding concern and members will not avoid seeking mental health treatment when they ought to, for fear of losing their jobs.

There's no question about it, sir, that if you cannot be a productive member of the armed forces, then at some point, we have to part ways, but I think a great deal more can be done over a longer period of time to ensure that they can, and there are ways we intend to use to retain people, so they can serve. All of that, I think, will help relieve people of the inordinate stress that goes on.

One final thing is that we need to work on resilience. Military duty is hard. It's hard for a reason, because we're put in challenging arenas, and people must be able to handle the rigours and stress of military operations. At the same time, we need to make military life and family life far more consistent and far more even and, quite frankly, we need to recognize the fact that it's special. It's part of the service too and we need to ensure that there is the correct compensation and benefits, and that family support services are in place that directly address the unique characteristics of military life.

• (1630)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much.

A lot of constituents in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour are in the shipbuilding industry. I'm proud to say that all the metal, all the steel, is being cut in Dartmouth and that Nova Scotia has a rich heritage of shipbuilding.

I'm pleased to see that we've committed to building all 15 of the surface combatants. I was a little shocked at the price tag, but I'm pleased to see that we've endorsed that commitment. I think investment is needed to address the long-standing capability gap.

With the Department of National Defence taking over managing 80% of the defence procurement contracts, will the department be managing the ongoing procurement of these ships? Will we see any differences? Will we see improvements in the way we traditionally see procurement, because we've seen a real issue with procurement—past governments included?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, for overall procurement—

The Chair: I'm going to have to go to the next person to keep everybody on time. So hold that answer, and if we have time, we'll circle back.

I'm going to yield the floor to Mr. Spengemann. You have five minutes.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, it's great to have you here. Thank you to you and your team of senior officials, both civilian and military, and for your service to our nation.

Minister, you've touched on elements of the vision that's driving the defence policy review. Could you take a moment to summarize your thoughts? What's the vision behind this document that you've put forward?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: In the overall vision, as I said, the number one focus is always making sure that we invest in the number one capability of the Canadian Armed Forces, our members, and making sure of their care, and also that we have the right sized force.

Within the overall policy, the reason we named it “Strong, Secure, Engaged” is that Canadians expected, during the consultations, that we would have the right resources and be strong at home, whether in supporting domestic operations and our sovereignty, or having all the right capabilities, and that is one of the real focuses there.

The other portion is to be secure in North America with our number one partner, our ally, the U.S. That's one of the reasons we're going to be starting discussions with the United States on NORAD modernization and the north warning system, to make sure we are looking at all perils and all threats and that we modernize our force to keep in line and build a proper system, the system that is going to be needed.

Finally, there is engagement in the world. We need to do our part. Multilateralism is important, but to do that we need to make sure that we have the right sized force; hence, the reason we're going to sustain the level of operations that our government or any future governments ask of the Canadian Armed Forces, but, more importantly, to make sure that we have the modern equipment to be able to do it, including a modern navy and a modern air force and enough boots on the ground with our army and the right capabilities to be able to carry out engagement in the world.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you for that.

Minister, the document also makes reference to the “global context”—I think that's the terminology used—and the changes that are currently going on. Not to be overly simplistic, it's a messy world out there and becoming even messier in some respects. Could you summarize for the committee what that context looks like and the challenges it imposes?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: On the security context, one of the things we started with was to understand the threat that's out there, speaking with our closest allies on this, making sure that we have Canadian Armed Forces that are well supported and well resourced for full-on conventional war fight, but at the same time being resourced so that they will be able to adapt to the various threats that are out there—hence, our support with Operation IMPACT currently, our leadership role in NATO, and our eventual peace support operations trying to reduce conflict. We're basically making sure that the Canadian Armed Forces has the full range, the full spectrum, the full-on conventional operations capability to do peace support operations and why we, as the government, are resourcing the Canadian Armed Forces so that the military leadership can make the right plans and give the right advice to government on that.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Is it fair to say in that context that the shift from interstate to intra-state conflict is a significant one that we have to be mindful of, but also have the equipment and expertise to tackle?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Absolutely. We think, with the evolving threat that's out there, that we have to be flexible and able to adapt to the changing environment. That's one of the reasons we have our innovation fund, \$1.6 billion to invest over the next years, to make sure that the Canadian Armed Forces are able to continually adapt to any future threats.

● (1635)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you very much.

Minister, I want to ask you about the core capabilities. You have touched on this in previous answers, but if you were to summarize the need to really focus on the core capabilities of our armed forces, what would your views be?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Chief.

Gen Jonathan Vance: The core capabilities are to be able to protect North America, its approaches, the air space, and to come to the aid of Canadians. It's the first set. That is air, maritime, surveillance and control, and land response.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: With a significant focus or changing focus on the Arctic presumably as well.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Absolutely. The Arctic is a pathway over the pole. It's a pathway of access to North America, and you're absolutely right to point that out in terms of the maritime domain and the increasing likelihood that it will change due to climate change.

Then there is the core capability to be able to move internally in Canada, and externally to international operations with our global capacity to project military power.

Finally, it's about the range, the suite of capabilities required in the modern day to be able to sustain oneself, sustain military forces, and conduct the missions they need to do. What it all boils down to is people at the core. The core capability of the Canadian Armed Forces is professionally trained people who can use the equipment they are given in all of those different domains, to use it effectively at home, in North America, and around the world.

The Chair: I'll have to cut it off there.

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hello, Minister Sajjan and gentlemen from National Defence.

My first impression of the defence policy was quite positive. I can't say the policy is bad. The content is good and includes many of the Conservatives' recommendations, which we appreciate. That said, for our military members and for the Canadian Armed Forces, the issue is that the document will be shelved. A huge budget is needed to implement the policy. We want the policy, and we believe in it. However, I want Minister Sajjan to explain how we'll fund the establishment of this defence policy.

When the budget was tabled, the Minister of Finance said there was enough funding for the Canadian Armed Forces. Then came the introduction of a defence policy that requires a financial commitment. You say, in the defence policy, that the policy is fully funded. Can you confirm that the necessary funding is actually set aside for the next 10 years? If not, which budget will the funding come from?
[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: That's a very good question. When we started the consultations and the defence policy review last year, we wanted to make sure that when we completed the defence policy that Canadians and the Canadian Armed Forces would have the confidence that this is a defence policy they can count on. The only way to do that is to make sure it's fully funded.

To get fully funded, we had to go through a very rigorous costing process that I'll have the deputy minister talk about. Also, when the finance minister announced the budget, he said that our government's commitment to the Canadian Armed Forces would be outlined in the defence policy. The policy, which is fully funded, is not for 10 years, but actually up to 20 years.

Do you want to talk about the costing process?

Mr. John Forster: Sure. Thank you, Minister.

In doing the costing, we engaged external experts from Deloitte who worked with our costing model. We had 29 personnel inside, and we hired Deloitte—which had done costing for the U.K. and Australia's defence policy as well. The projects were re-costed by the finance team with Deloitte.

We then had five external firms look at the methodology and the process used, and they verified that it was a good process.

Now, there are still initial cost estimates, and those estimates will change over time, but we're—

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Forster, sorry for cutting you off. I understand that the assessment and the mathematical calculations to establish a costed plan are complex, and that they were done in a professional manner.

However, from a political standpoint, I want to know how the funding will be set aside in a reliable way, given that the investments were delayed until after the 2019 election. I'm speaking from a political standpoint, and not from a military operations standpoint. I know that, from a military standpoint, you're all willing to do this, and our military members want this to work. Nevertheless, from a political standpoint, can the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister confirm that the funding will be available to implement this plan?

• (1640)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: It's not only that. Just to simplify it, we did the costing to find out what our plan was going to cost. We worked with the Minister of Finance and asked whether we had the money in the fiscal framework. He said yes. We then discussed it in cabinet, which fully approved and fully funded it for the next 20 years, so that the military now has a plan for predictable and sustainable funding.

Also, I just want to note that this is one of the reasons that we outlined and spent a lot of time in the defence policy talking about how it was costed and what defence spending was going to look like, so that it's black and white and our government and any future governments can be held to account.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I want to believe you, Minister Sajjan. Let me remind you that we've been having many issues for the past year and a half. We'll see what will happen in the future.

My second question concerns the navy. The bidding process for the Canadian surface combatant project has been changed 50 times to date. Why have there been so many changes?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Before I pass on the question, I think for the Canadian surface combatant, we did go through extremely rigorous costing to make it very clear how much it was going to cost—\$56 billion to \$60 billion—to make sure that we take into account now the full costing of this. Now, it's up to us to make sure that we go through that process. But this is what it does: it gives confidence now to the industry at the same time that this is going to be fully funded.

Pat, do you want to add to that?

The Chair: If you can do it in 10 seconds or less, I would appreciate it.

[Translation]

Rear-Admiral (Retired) Patrick Finn (Assistant Deputy Minister, Materiel, Department of National Defence): Thank you for the question, Mr. Paul-Hus.

It was to respond to the questions and comments from those who were going to submit bids. The changes reflected the answers to the questions we received.

[English]

The Chair: The next question is going to be from Mr. Robillard.

I know that French interpretation on this end is not awesome. I can barely hear it. I'm not sure how it is down there.

A voice: It's the same on this end.

The Chair: Do we have someone looking into that? I can barely understand what's happening.

Give it a try, Mr. Robillard, with your question. We'll see how it works.

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Okay. Thank you.

[Translation]

Hello, Minister Sajjan.

Thank you for being here with your team.

Let's talk about our reservists. Like other places in Quebec and across Canada, Laval was struck by terrible flooding this spring.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Robillard, I'm going to interrupt you here because I can't understand. I'm going to switch your speaking order and I'll give the floor to Ms. Gallant. She'll ask a question in English, if that's okay, and we'll get the technicians to work on the interpretation in the meantime.

Ms. Gallant, you have the floor.

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

I was somewhat encouraged to see that there is going to be a promise to add special forces to the personnel, but these people are needed today. People in CSOR are burning out already. They're overextended. I'm asking you today to commit to when you're going to recruit and stand up these additional troops.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Our commitment is right there in the defence policy and shows the importance of not just all the three services but our special forces as well, the assessment that was needed, and the advice that was given of what we needed to provide for our special forces, and hence the reason that we have made that commitment. The work starts now. The implementation will come to the chief of the defence staff to be able to do so.

Before you interrupt there, we as a government are committing to making sure we have all the right resources. Now the chief of the defence staff and his team will be actually implementing that plan.

Chief, do you want to add to that?

Gen Jonathan Vance: Ma'am, we're growing now. CANSOF will grow by 600.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Pardon me, but I know we're on short time. It's not a plan, not a policy, if the accompanying money isn't in the budget. When are they going to stand up, realistically?

Gen Jonathan Vance: Ma'am, I have room to hire and pay 68,000 people. I have 66,000. I can buy 2,000 as quickly as I can. I have enough money to pay the people we need.

CSOR is not burning out. CSOR is doing just fine. I know they're in your riding, but they're my forces. They're not burning out. In fact, they're looking for jobs, they're looking for deployments, and I'm very proud of the fact that they are.

The increase to CANSOF across the board to take them up 600-plus will include investments in CSOR, but in the other capabilities in CANSOF as well. That is—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay, and they're starting training when?

Gen Jonathan Vance: I beg your pardon, ma'am?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: They're starting training when?

Gen Jonathan Vance: Well, the interesting thing is that—and maybe where your premise is a little bit off—we draw into CSOR from the existing armed forces. There's nothing stopping us from growing, save for the fact that they have to make it through the training and the selection. That command is growing at the rate that we can grow them, given the material, the people inside the armed forces who they can grow with. They don't join from the street into CSOR, so we're doing fine, ma'am.

● (1645)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I'm aware of that. Thank you, General. Even with the \$8.5 billion removed from the budget, I'm pleased to know that somehow you're going to start giving the additional training so they can join CSOR.

Now I'm also a bit pleased to see that there is an intention to stand up a cyber unit. As we've seen with the Phoenix system nightmare, the bureaucracy doesn't know how to state the specifications for even a software solution, so how do you expect to design a training plan when the people writing the specifications for the proposal don't even have the cybersecurity expertise themselves?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: I'm going to have the deputy minister explain that, especially the false premise you've made regarding the \$8.5 billion.

Deputy Minister, do you want to clear that up?

Mr. John Forster: Yes, the \$8.5 billion was not a cut to the defence budget. We had to clean up the balance sheet before we brought in the policy and the new money. We were simply moving money to when projects like fixed-wing SAR will arrive. Because of accrual accounting we have to put the money with when the equipment comes into use. That is the answer on that point.

On your other question on IT procurement skills, as you saw today tabled in the national security legislation, CSE will be assisting the CAF. Between the armed forces and the Communications Security Establishment, I can tell you that there are computer skills second to none anywhere in this country. In terms of cyber and what both those organizations can deliver, it is exceptional. I have no concerns whatsoever on their capability to develop cyber defence and proactive cyber operations that are world class.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: So we're going to have to wait till another government comes into place for the delivery of the equipment. But why not utilize the people who have the warrior mindset, and in some instances the security clearances, who are almost medically releasing, but who could be trained with this added expertise so you don't have to release them into civil society, where they have no chance of getting an immediate job? For this cyber unit, you don't necessarily have to deploy to a theatre of war. They can be utilized right here in Canada.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Madam Gallant, before the chief can answer that question in detail, you can't just make a statement all of sudden so that everybody thinks it's real. You have to look at the cuts that were also done in the past. I've been very non-partisan about this in terms of successive governments, but these are the cuts that we're having to deal with. This defence policy is dealing with a hollowed-out force now. We didn't have the number of people to be able to deal with this. Before making false statements like this, look at what we're trying to achieve. This money is going to fill the hole of the deficit reduction action plan, the review that was done that cut \$2 billion from the budget. That's one of the reasons we're having to invest now: to fill this hole, and to be able to deal now with the type of investment we're going to be making into the future.

The Chair: I'm going to have to hold it there. We went a little bit over the time.

I'm going to give the floor to Ms. Alleslev, and then back to you, Mr. Robillard.

Ms. Alleslev.

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you.

As a former air force officer, and one who had the privilege of being involved with the 1994 white paper, I certainly can appreciate just how much work went into this document. I'd like to commend you and everyone in the forces and the Department of National Defence who worked on it, because this is a very comprehensive and impressive document. Thank you very much.

My riding is very concerned about defence and security, and was involved in the town hall in advance of the defence policy review, and just two weeks ago we had a town hall on NATO. One of the things that came up in that town hall was a concern about our commitment to the alliance and, in particular, the Arctic. I was very excited to see on page 80 that we have committed to conducting joint exercises with Arctic allies and partners and support the strengthening of situational awareness and information-sharing in the Arctic, including with NATO.

I wondered, Minister, if you could expand on that, particularly in light of the fact that we will have our NATO parliamentarians and senator allies coming to Canada to study our Arctic in September. Could you tell us what this means in a little more detail, and also share with us why it's important to Canada as one of the five Arctic NATO members, and why it's important to NATO?

•(1650)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, I'll explain the outline of our government's support for multilaterals, and especially NATO. I was very proud. The chief and I both returned from Latvia just yesterday, where we attended our enhanced forward battle group initial operational capability parade. It was a clear demonstration by Canada, alongside the NATO secretary-general and the Latvian president and defence minister, of what it means when NATO nations come together and make a decision showing interoperability. As you know, NATO does provide a tremendous capability against Russian aggression. At the same time, as we look at the north and our Arctic sovereignty, we will be looking at NORAD modernization and will working with NATO as well.

Chief, do you want to add anything?

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thank you, Minister.

Thanks for working on the 1994 white paper. I had to implement that one. It's good that we've come full circle here.

I'll be very brief. It is increasingly difficult, because of the transnational and transregional threats we face, to separate NATO and European northern defence and NORAD and Arctic defence. I'm not saying for a minute that we're going to be militarizing the Arctic with NATO forces, but it is inconceivable to imagine a large conventional conflagration in mainland or northern Europe without there being a threat to Canadian airspace through NORAD.

All of that planning for NORAD modernization and where we will take North American defence and how that sits with our other alliance obligations to NATO is part of what this policy asks us to do.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: That's fantastic, and I'm sure that when our NATO parliamentarians come to Canada in the fall, they'll be very excited to hear more about that.

The minister mentioned, but perhaps you could give us a little more information on, our role in the expeditionary force, the enhanced forward presence in Latvia. Again, why does it matter to Canada that we're there as a NATO ally, and why is it important to NATO?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: As Minister Freeland outlined in her foreign policy priorities speech, multilateralism is important. In NATO, we play a key role. We were one of the founding members. NATO allows us to send a very strong and strategic message to the Russian aggression, while at the same time allowing us to keep the dialogue open. But we can't just use words; we need to demonstrate it on the ground.

The eFP battle group is one portion that clearly demonstrates that. A political decision was made giving that direction to our militaries, doing the planning, and then showing that execution on the ground. That's what NATO is about, and we demonstrated that very well yesterday.

The Chair: Mr. Robillard, the floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let's talk about our reservists, Minister Sajjan. Like other places in Quebec and across Canada, Laval was struck by terrible flooding this spring. I saw on the ground the work of our military members as part of Operation Lentus. I witnessed their exemplary sense of duty.

In return, Minister Sajjan, how will the new defence policy support our reservists?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: First of all, this is one thing I'm very excited about, in working with the chief on our plan for the reserves.

The reserves play a critical role. As we all know, they have a direct connection with our community. They literally are the base of the community. They also provide a very important, critical role, as was just demonstrated with the floods in Quebec. Approximately 800 personnel of the task force were from the reserves.

We need to make sure they're properly resourced and that we grow the size of the force to the right numbers, and that they are relevant. One of the things we're looking at is making sure they have the right training and equipment. We're also looking at the new domains. We're going to be looking at potential cyber capabilities. We have some great expertise within the reserves, and we want to utilize that. There's tremendous expertise out there. How are we going to use that expertise overseas?

General Vance has some significant plans for the reserves. Do you want to touch upon that, Chief?

•(1655)

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thanks, Minister.

I am very proud of the response by both regular and reserve forces to the floods and, in fact, any time something happens in Canada.

Very critical in the policy is achieving a posture of full-time capability through part-time service. We want to put more into the reserves when they are delivering every day for Canadians. It's not just about being ready to deliver, but being involved in operations. Cyber, as the minister mentioned, is important, and intelligence. We'll have UAVs to fly.

There's also that latent response of young, fit men and women. Their job may be on a radio, but in the dead of night they can get called out to move sandbags around. That is one of the powerful virtues of a military force that is *un peu polyvalente*. Not only can you use your specific skill that you've been tasked to use, but you can do other things. That is particularly important when it comes to protecting Canadians and coming to their aid.

Finally, there are some very specific things that we put in the reserves that will have a domestic consequence. Heavy and light urban search and rescue, the capacity to respond to major disasters, and major challenges with natural disasters will be embedded.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Minister Sajjan, I want to talk about recruitment. In the past, the enlistment process for the reserve force or regular force could be long and discouraging. Obviously, the last thing we want is to see good candidates discouraged by administrative delays. How will the new defence policy improve the recruitment process for our forces?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: In fact, we've already moved out on the recruitment process. Do you want to outline it?

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thanks, Minister.

With the reserves, we've reduced recruiting down to two parade nights. It takes less than a month. With the regular force, I've directed military personnel to bring it down to about 30 days, if at all possible.

Here is the problem, and it's not as simple a thing as just doing bureaucracy faster. We have to ensure that we do adequate screening for mental health to ensure that we don't hire someone into the armed forces who we are going to hurt further by their service in the armed forces because they have a latent condition. We have to make certain that we do the security clearances. We have to make certain that we don't run into a situation where people go into the forces too fast and are incapable of service. So it's a balance.

You are correct that it has been, in the past, too bureaucratic and slow, but we still have to stay faithful to the idea of security screening and health screening.

On the security side, we do not want to be in a position where we hire someone into the armed forces who bears any resemblance to someone who would, at some point, be disloyal to Canada and the armed forces and therefore cause problems.

The Chair: I will have to end it there.

Mr. Garrison, you'll get the last three minutes with the minister.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to say that I am pleased to hear there are going to be supplemental estimates and at the time I'll ask more about whether that gets added to the base. It looks as if it does, and that would be a good thing for the military.

I want to go back to talking about diversity and recruiting and retention a little bit, where I left off.

One of the things we saw at the end of the last government was that the recruiting budgets had been cut, and a lot of times the smaller recruiting centres in rural and remote areas were closed, and some of the mobile recruiting centres that used to visit northern areas and reserves were cut back. I'm just looking for encouragement here that there have been funds to restore those rural and remote and aboriginal recruiting efforts.

•(1700)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: In fact, regarding the importance of having that increased diversity, I'll give you full confidence in terms of the direction we're going. We want to have increased awareness with our indigenous community and being able to recruit.

There are a lot of programs, actually, within the Canadian Armed Forces that are doing tremendous work. We need to also make sure that, from those rural communities, some of those reserve units can be supported as well.

It is that fine balance, but one thing I can assure you is that this defence policy has all the right resources to make sure we invest in the recruitment and retention of a diverse force.

Mr. Randall Garrison: In terms of retention, we had some unfortunate cases that have come forward in the media, especially with women who are quite often, when relationships break up, the ones who become the caregivers and the single parent with kids.

I want to ask whether the Canadian Forces are actively working on plans and proposals to support single parents, so they can stay in the military and we don't lose their skills and experience and their dedication.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: During the consultations we heard about a lot of the various challenges. They are the reasons some of these policies have been put in place. One of the reasons we are investing in the MFRCs is to make sure they have the right day care support. Even at the rollout, hearing that great advice during the town hall meetings, we were able to feed in what we were hearing, to be able to pass it on to the military chain of command. The chief of the defence staff and the leadership were also going out.

We are doing everything in our power to make sure we look after our men and women, to make the Canadian Armed Forces more attractive for single mums.

Is there anything in particular you want to add to that?

Gen Jonathan Vance: I won't comment on the case specifically. Again, with everything, there is balance. Absolutely, we want to have and celebrate anybody, whatever type of family you have, or whatever way your family happens to be rolling at the time, we want you to be able to serve in the armed forces and serve with distinction.

But it is service before self. We have an ethos that ultimately you are to serve. So there are challenges, and thousands of single parents in the armed forces deal with the challenge of having to do the military job and also perform the responsible role as a parent. Like any job, you have a parental responsibility as well.

That said, the unique demands of military service that take you away place more emphasis on the need to be set as a family, whatever construct the family has, for those absences, and we'll do everything we can, short of becoming the parent, to support people as they do that.

But your point, though, speaks to something that's near and dear to my heart, and that is to make certain that we look at people in a longer view. Individuals may have a problem now, and it might take a number of years to fix, but a number of years hence they still want to join and they still want to serve and we have to see the latent and potential value over a longer horizon with people, and we're going to put that and enshrine that into our policies.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you.

The Chair: I'm going to have to stop it there.

I want to thank the minister for coming today to discuss the new defence policy.

I am going to suspend the meeting for a couple of minutes to allow the minister to depart, and then we'll resume with the officials.

• (1700)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1705)

The Chair: Welcome back, everybody.

We have about 23 minutes left.

I'd like to divvy up the time into five-minute blocks initially. I'll go to each party for five minutes: I'll give the Liberals five, then the

Conservatives five, and then Mr. Garrison five, and then we'll see where we are.

The floor is yours, Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

General Vance, I want to give you the opportunity to circle back to earlier testimony. You were in the process of answering a question that had to do with the capability gap, and you were cut off because of time constraints. I would like to ask you if you could finish your thoughts on that issue for the benefit of the committee.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Thank you.

I'll pick up on the question about NATO and NORAD defence. The capability gap is about the 88 planes: being able to have an 88-plane output and closing that ability to have an 88-plane output in the safest and best way possible with a capability we can rely on. The minister has answered the question about the interim fleet.

I want to make it absolutely clear. You are hearing it now from the chief of the defence staff. This is me. This is my advice. The capability gap exists in terms of the numbers of aircraft we have. It is inconceivable that we would be in a major kinetic configuration on mainland Europe using air power without there being any concomitant threat to North American airspace. Therefore, it is the policy of the Government of Canada, and certainly my advice to the Government of Canada, that we must be able to have the mission-ready aircraft necessary to defend Canadian airspace and NATO airspace simultaneously, should either one or both arrive.

Again, there is no chief of defence I know of who would believe—and certainly I don't—that we would be in a shooting war in Europe and not have our own airspace threatened. With that, we need to be able to do both, and we have commitments to do both. We need the mission-ready aircraft all the time. When you do the math on their deep maintenance and daily maintenance rates, you get 88. That is the capability gap being discussed. That is the number of aircraft we need, and that is why: to be able to defend both in NATO and in North America at the same time.

The pathway to get there is often what's described. The interim aircraft fleet is a pathway to get there, as is the final competition for 88 aircraft, to make certain that we have the aircraft we need to fill that. It is important now, and it has been spoken of a lot. You are hearing it from the chief of the defence staff, my advice.

Unfortunately, based on timing and when committee appearances occurred that came out of the RCAF, my advice and the policy of the Government of Canada have changed after the first committee appearance. That first committee appearance by the commander of the RCAF is no longer relevant or valid, because at that time he was dealing with a different policy. He has a new policy: to be able to do NORAD and NATO simultaneously, because simultaneous threat is what we are dealing with now.

Thank you.

• (1710)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: General, thank you for very much.

The committee has heard testimony on this issue over the course of its studies, but for the benefit of the Canadian public could you respond to the following? You talked about airplanes and the number 80 being a very important factor. How important is what's in those aircraft: the weapons systems, the software, and the interoperability with other fighter fleets and air fleets?

Gen Jonathan Vance: It's 88 aircraft. That consists of a statement of operational requirements that I'm responsible for. I'm responsible for ultimately signing off to the minister that this is what the military needs, and the threat horizon, the time, and the likely scope of use of our aircraft. The RCAF has the expertise to put it together.

That drives what the on-board systems must be. There are on-board systems that must be able to allow the aircraft to fly in peaceful air space, the avionics and so forth to be able to fly modern aircraft in Canadian air space and allied air space.

Then there's the military fly capability that must allow the aircraft to be able to defend itself in the air, to be able to defend air space, to be able to survive, and to be able to conduct offensive operations, should we have to fight to get to Europe, for example. All of this counts, but it's all in the SOR, and industry builds their planes to be able to do that.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: That's very helpful, Mr. Chair.

Those are my questions. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan, you have the floor for five minutes.

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

I'll just make one statement and then I'm going to turn it over to Pierre Paul-Hus.

With all due respect, General, your predecessor, the former chief of the defence staff, General Tom Lawson, just said a couple of weeks ago that there is no capability gap. Thirteen former commanders of the Royal Canadian Air Force have said there is no capability gap. Now, if the threat levels increase and we need more planes, then just buy the planes. But the idea that we need an interim solution is going to compromise our capability, compromise our resources, and compromise our ability to have enough pilots. I have to put that on the record because there have been enough experts who have actually flown the CF-18s, who have said completely the opposite to what you just stated.

Gen Jonathan Vance: The capability gap that I'm describing is the need to have 88 airplanes. I think you would agree that it is the ability to do simultaneous operations in NATO and NORAD. None of those former people, or Tom Lawson, were commenting on that. In fact, when they were in the forces, they didn't have that policy. In fact, the policy of the government of the day was not to be able to do them both simultaneously.

What is very important to understand in this policy is that for the first time in my life in the forces, there's a "concurrency of operations" model, where you must be able to do the following simultaneously. It's never been done before. It has a dramatic and important impact on our ability to develop our force structure—

Mr. James Bezan: As long as we're clear, it's about policy change rather than actual operations that were employed before.

Gen Jonathan Vance: No. The policy change is a result of what our allies and we face in the world. I would challenge anybody, you included, to paint me a world—

Mr. James Bezan: I'm challenging you.

Gen Jonathan Vance:—where we would be in a shooting war in Europe and we'd be all safe at home here in North America. It won't exist. Threats are transregional—

Mr. James Bezan: But in that situation, 88 planes aren't even enough if we're in—

Gen Jonathan Vance: I beg your pardon?

Mr. James Bezan: Eighty-eight planes won't even be enough if we're into a full war.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Eighty-eight planes are better than 65.

Mr. James Bezan: I'll turn it over to Mr. Paul-Hus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Vance, I want to talk about submarines. We gather that the defence policy says that we should keep our old submarines and invest \$2.5 billion in modernizing them.

Is that correct?

Gen Jonathan Vance: Yes.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: In this instance, what does modernize mean? I know that the *Windsor* has new electronic monitoring equipment. In what part of these old submarines will you invest the \$2.5 billion? In mechanics?

• (1715)

[*English*]

Gen Jonathan Vance: Okay, I think I'll let the submarine expert at the table answer that question. But suffice it to say, any modernization effort is going to be designed to ensure that the platform is able to function in a threat environment that we intend to use it in. It's going to involve all the systems of the submarines to ensure that we can defend the underwater approaches to Canada, in combination with underwater RPSs, remotely piloted systems, as well as to project offshore. I think Monsieur Finn will explain.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: The Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence recommended that 12 new submarines be acquired. At the Standing Committee on National Defence, we've just submitted a report. The report was tabled last week. We also recommend the purchase of new submarines.

As part of the defence policy, why did the navy decide to invest billions of dollars in old submarines that are already outdated rather than acquire new submarines?

[*English*]

Gen Jonathan Vance: I think that we need to see the defence policy not as a wish list but as the equipment necessary to do the job that the Government of Canada has given us.

So we consider the four submarines, with the additional anti-submarine and water column defence mechanisms that we'll have, sufficient to do the job that the Government of Canada has asked us to do in the maritime domain.

[Translation]

RAdm Patrick Finn: I want to address the comment that the submarines are outdated. In reality, they have strong capacities and they regularly demonstrate, during operations, what they can accomplish. We've had many issues with maintenance and spare parts. That's a fact. However, we're addressing the situation. Also, some aspects of modernization involve acquiring spare parts and more recent equipment that's easier to maintain. In any event, these submarines demonstrate their exceptional capacities during operations and exercises.

[English]

The Chair: Your time is up.

Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm very pleased to see the commitment to the subs, given the riding I represent. Any modernization, of course, is likely to take place there, but I also think it's an important part of Canada's ability to play a role on the world stage, and I'm also very glad to see the commitment to the shipbuilding strategy.

I have a question. It says in the shipbuilding strategy that we will get what is called a defence investment plan in 2018. Is that going to then lay out the parameters for procurement, and will that include a plan to centralize more of the procurement in DND?

Mr. John Forster: The plan right now will increase the delegation of authority from Public Services and Procurement to National Defence, and that will take care of about 80% of the defence procurement contracts that are \$5 million or less, and we'll manage those.

That will leave Public Services with us and the industry department to manage the large, more high-risk, more challenging procurements, such as jets and ships. So they will continue to lead on the procurement of the ships, but we will be taking 80% of the contracts ourselves.

Sorry, there was another part of your question and I—

Mr. Randall Garrison: Let me just go on.

Also, you talk about an increase, 1,150 defence—

Mr. John Forster: Oh, sorry, you asked about the investment plan.

Yes, our intent is that for the first time we will publish our investment plan. Normally, that's something we take to Treasury Board, they approve it, and—

Mr. Randall Garrison: Nobody sees it.

Mr. John Forster: Nobody ever sees it.

So in the interests of transparency, there are two things in this policy. One, we are going to publish regular public report cards on major procurements. They will say what our intended schedule was and how we are doing against it, so you can hold all of us to account.

Two, the investment plan lays out for the next five years what it is we're planning to buy. We'll have cost ranges and timelines in there, and it's updated every three years. So we will publish the next one next year, for the first time ever.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I certainly do welcome those changes. I think they'll be quite important.

You talk about increasing defence civilians by 1,150, I think it is. I've heard a lot of concern about increasing privatization of maintenance functions, having those services provided by private companies rather than maintaining those skills within DND or within the Canadian Forces.

It looks good to me, to see more defence civilians. How does that relate to those privatization trends that have been taking place?

• (1720)

Mr. John Forster: The civilians we'll be hiring will be in direct support to the Canadian Armed Forces. We'll certainly be putting them into areas like intelligence, cyber, and more into procurement. We'll continue to use a mix of our own people and private industry on maintenance and support.

Pat, you might want to add to that.

RAdm Patrick Finn: Thank you for the question.

Yes, in fact, we're very familiar with the fleet maintenance facilities and have a lot of discussions with them. What we're trying to do with the fleet maintenance facilities and other places is to make sure that they are focused on our most capable assets, meaning our submarines and frigates, and therefore, take the less complex things.... A lot of what we're doing around sustainment is bundling contracts that are going to industry. It is not any effort to reduce the number of public servants who are either army, navy, air force, special forces, or otherwise working on maintenance, but to make sure that they're focused on our most capable assets, where we really need the expertise, on those key military assets.

Mr. John Forster: We don't see a shrinking of the fleet maintenance facilities at all, but they will be doing the higher-value, more technologically complicated land support.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I think that's good news, both for the workers but also just for the maintenance of the skills and the capability. My concern about privatization has always been that we would lose the capabilities, and then the next time it's time to bid, somebody's bidding on something else, and those skills walk away from us.

I think it's good news to hear that you're going to try to focus the fleet maintenance at the high end and keep those high-end skills. We need to keep, in particular in my case, the navy running.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds.

Given the time we have left and the will—I saw lots of people signalling that they wanted more time for more questions—I'm going to allow three more questions of two minutes each. So just be careful when you're asking your question that you don't burn up all the time. Again, this means that you have to wrap it up pretty quickly.

Mr. Robillard, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: General Vance, I asked the Prime Minister a question on June 7, during the question period. I hope that you can elaborate on the matter today.

We know the government has announced its new defence policy. Since it's our duty to support our women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces, can you provide the details of this new defence policy, and focus specifically on the measures to support our families?

Gen Jonathan Vance: I imagine that I have less than two minutes to respond.

[*English*]

The Chair: You have a minute and a half, General.

Gen Jonathan Vance: That's less than two minutes.

I think I will describe this very generally and give you some specifics. What we need to do is to make the family experience in the armed forces more consistent and even across the country. Families deal with different housing markets, different tax rates, different costs of living in different parts of the country, and so we have to look at that. We have to make certain that the family experience with education, doctors, and generally with the services to families becomes more consistent and even.

There are different ways to do that. We are going to look at all of those different ways. Some can be done by compensation. Others can be done by doing more things inside the armed forces in empowering or increasing the capacity of the MFRCs to provide more front-line services to families so that their experience is better.

We're going to invest in the MFRCs. That's directly in the policy. We're going to invest in military families in a variety of ways, not the least of which will be to reduce harm.

I believe that, overall, the career path in the armed forces will be somewhat more individualized and account for the various changes that occur in one's life over long service. I would like us to be a bit more thoughtful and humane in how we deal with people and families, and I think that will help.

The Chair: Awesome.

Ms. Gallant, for two minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Both the defence plan and the foreign affairs announcement were mute on the UN mission that has been discussed. Where are our troops being sent on a UN mission?

Gen Jonathan Vance: The government has not decided yet where the troops will be sent. We have troops on a UN mission right now. I think we have to remember that. There are over 1,000 troops deployed right now.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: So there's no specific training you're giving right now for a mission?

Gen Jonathan Vance: I beg your pardon, madam.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What are they training for UN-wise?

• (1725)

Gen Jonathan Vance: I don't have troops specifically training for any particular mission. We're doing general training across the board.

In anticipation of government decision-making on this, there's no question that we're doing everything we can to be prudent about being ready, but there is no mission assigned to the Canadian Forces.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

Canadians remember the politically motivated decision by Chrétien in 1993 to interfere with military procurement, which ended up on the backs of soldiers when his government cancelled the EH101 helicopter contract—a decision that you, Mr. Vance, know very well cost lives in Afghanistan. And any hole that the minister referred to was left over from that decade of darkness that we just didn't had a chance to completely fill.

Keeping in mind the fact that history is exactly repeating itself with the interference in fighter jet procurement, what good is it if we have a plan for 88 jets, or whatever number it is, that relies on a future government 10, 20, and even 50 years from now when we've already seen what happened with the cheap point scoring on the helicopter contract?

Really, when are these going to materialize? We do count on a new government to come in to fulfill this plan.

The Chair: That's will have to be left as an opinion, because they're not going to have time to answer it, I'm sorry.

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Garrison.

Gen Jonathan Vance: And I had a really good answer.

The Chair: Maybe Mr. Garrison can pick up on it. It's his time.

You have the floor for the remaining two minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much.

One thing I was disappointed not to see in the defence review was any mention of the unique ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to function in two official languages. From my own work abroad, I know that's been one of Canada's strong capabilities, and it's one reason we're sometimes called upon.

The minister's not here, and I probably should have asked him this, but what I'm looking for is a commitment that we will continue having that as a focus of the Canadian Armed Forces—units that can operate in both languages and some that operate in either language.

Do we still have that very strong commitment in the defence review? It wasn't mentioned.

Gen Jonathan Vance: Perhaps one reason it wasn't mentioned is the opening of the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean, which will be an important avenue to ensure that officer production accounts for *la dynamique francophone*.

We also are governed appropriately, and thankfully, by the laws of Canada, and we continue to follow the law of Canada as it relates to our institution. We try all the time, every day, to respond appropriately to any challenges against us in terms of our official

languages policy, and we seek every day to ensure that people can and will be trained in both official languages. You cannot reach certain rank levels in the armed forces without becoming functionally bilingual, and so on.

There is no backing away from that whatsoever. In fact, I think the opening of the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean is a positive signal that says, "Hey, this is important."

The Chair: That was the last question.

Gentlemen, thank you for coming today to talk to us about the new defence policy. I am sure we will see you shortly, in the coming months, on the supplementary estimates when they're brought forward.

Thank you very much.

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