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• (1720)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Colleagues, as I am understanding this very confusing day, we have until 6:17, at which point the bells will start ringing for a vote at 6:47. That's what I understand to be the truth, which is probably good for the next 30 seconds, at which point everything will change again.

I want to thank the witnesses for being so gracious with their time. It is extraordinarily frustrating to have all of these votes and delays and cancellations, etc. This time of year is just difficult. Again, I thank you for helping us out with the study.

First of all, we have the Emergency Management NGO Consortium, led by Mr. Goodyear and Mr. Saugh.

We are waiting for Mr. Damien Burns. He will join the panel. He was originally scheduled for the second panel.

We haven't been able to make contact with Mr. Leuprecht, who is in Europe. My guess is that we won't be able to hear from him, which adds to my frustration because that's the third time we've invited him and had to cancel at the last minute, all of which is not good news.

I thank you again for your patience and invite you to make your opening statements, and then we will go to the first round of questions.

Colleagues, since the vote is going to be called at 6:17, how much flexibility can you give me? I guess we can run that up to 6:17. We'll have a few minutes anyway.

Let's start with the Emergency Management NGO Consortium of Canada and Mr. Goodyear.

Mr. Perron Goodyear (Chair, Emergency Management NGO Consortium of Canada): Thanks very much. I appreciate the opportunity.

First, I'd like to acknowledge that this is sacred land, upon which I am privileged to live and work. I recognize the deep connection and the long-standing relationship between indigenous peoples and the land of London, Ontario. This land is the traditional territory of the Anishinabe, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapéewak and Attawandaron, and continues to be home to diverse indigenous peoples, whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors to our society.

I speak today as the chair of the Emergency Management NGO Consortium of Canada, or EMNCC.

EMNCC's mission is to optimize the contribution of non-governmental organizations that help increase disaster resilience in communities in Canada. The purpose of EMNCC is to facilitate coordination, collaboration, co-operation, communication and consideration among all emergency management partners, including indigenous peoples, municipalities and communities. EMNCC champions the capabilities of member organizations active in disaster and emergency management and promotes a whole-of-society approach to serving communities across Canada.

EMNCC's membership includes the following organizations: the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, ADRA; the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team; the Canadian Red Cross; CanOps; the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association; the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary; Food Banks Canada; Humane Canada; the Menonite Disaster Service; Radio Amateurs of Canada; Samaritan's Purse Canada; the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada; St. John Ambulance; Team Rubicon; the Salvation Army; and World Renew.

The value of EMNCC lies within its ability to provide coordinated support to government agencies and local authorities. Our influence is derived from a proven collective ability to support emergency management organizations by providing a simple, trusted and unified base of NGO support. The EMNCC also strives to reduce complexity within the decision action cycle during a domestic disaster.

In addition to the coordinated emergency response services that we provide, a vital component is also acknowledging the severe impact it has on individuals' emotional and psychological health and well-being. We also have the capacity and expertise within our consortium to provide psychosocial support during times of emergencies, crises or disasters, which helps to address the initial dramatic experiences caused by life's disruptions.

During our recent Emergency Preparedness Week, the Government of Canada announced \$150 million in funding to support non-governmental organizations in their humanitarian response to COVID-19 and other large-scale emergencies. The funding will support capacity building and domestic response resources for four of EMNCC's NGOs: the Salvation Army, the Canadian Red Cross, St. John Ambulance and the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada.

Specifically, this funding has gone to support vital services on the ground for several provinces and all three territories that have requested federal assistance, including critical care nurses in hospitals, support in long-term care facilities and retirement homes, epidemic prevention and control, and vaccination support. It has also supported deployments to respond to outbreaks in remote indigenous communities. With this funding, organizations will continue to maintain a highly skilled and qualified group of emergency responders and emergency management professionals, which will help fund the development of emergency management systems, deliver top-tier training and acquire some equipment needed for rapid mobilization.

Finally, in addition to these four organizations, EMNCC member organizations are able to bring significant expertise to domestic response, allowing the Canadian Armed Forces to support other efforts, or as an enhancement to any CAF domestic operations.

Thank you.

• (1725)

The Chair: Thank you.

I see that Mr. Burns is online.

Mr. Burns, do you have a five-minute opening statement?

Mr. Damien Burns (Assistant Deputy Minister, Protective Services, Government of Yukon): Thank you very much.

My name is Damien Burns, and I am the assistant deputy minister of protective services with the Government of Yukon.

To open today, I would just like to say that every summer across western North America and across the world, wildfires threaten communities and infrastructure. Evacuations displace communities for weeks at a time. Air quality plummets to dangerous levels, and livelihoods are impacted by area closures, reduced tourism and damage to critical infrastructure.

The changing climate is increasing the length of the fire season. The severity of the weather within the season and the chance of ignition are widening. Most important, our neighbourhoods and communities in Yukon are expanding into the wildland/urban interface at an increased exposure to the mix of accumulated fuels and worsening fire climate. All across the world we are experiencing longer, more intense fire seasons that have pushed our fire response capacity to the brink of failure.

This perceived increase in extreme fire behaviour and the challenges of the past few seasons have really raised that awareness to a level of national significance, but it is believed that over the next few decades climate change will continue to significantly affect wildlife, fire management and emergency management in Canada. We do expect longer, more intense fire seasons and more extreme weather events, including droughts and flooding. We expect these environmental catastrophes to be more difficult to manage. This is, of course, a Yukon problem and a national problem.

This problem was clearly amplified last summer when in the Yukon we had to contend with the worst flooding in recent memory. Over 400 homes and pieces of critical infrastructure were threatened by rising water in our southern lakes. The challenges of this

flooding, coupled with an average challenging Yukon fire season and the ongoing challenges of managing the global pandemic at the time, truly strained our emergency response providers in the Yukon. We were forced to call upon the Canadian Armed Forces, which kindly and generously provided 200 members to come and provide support to those 400 homes and the critical infrastructure that was affected. The support from the armed forces was invaluable in protecting these homes, which, in effect, represent the second-largest community in the Yukon.

The support was invaluable, but we see these emergencies increasing and further pressuring our resources. We see this climate emergency as an oppressing and immediate threat, and we are seeing the effects of a changing climate on our environment and across our Yukon communities.

I think I will leave it at that for now. Thank you.

• (1730)

The Chair: Thank you.

I also want to thank you for your patience and your flexibility in coming onto the first panel instead of the second panel.

With that, colleagues, we'll go to the first round of questions. I'm looking at the time. We have 50 minutes, so we will start by giving at least the first round a full time allotment.

Mrs. Gallant, go ahead for six minutes, please.

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

For the ADM for the Yukon, would you outline what happens when you are anticipating some type of natural disaster? For example, when you know the melt is sufficient and all the conditions are right for a flood, do you call together a command centre? Who gets contacted? At what point do you start reaching out to higher levels of government for assistance? What are the circumstances under which you would ask for federal assistance?

Mr. Damien Burns: We have several standing response structures in the Yukon. We have a very mature and well-developed wildland fire program. We benefit in that program from a very robust resource exchange program across the country. We have certain levels of preparedness that we are used to and plan for in the Yukon. We've resourced ourselves accordingly in the Yukon for what we anticipate to be an average fire season. We look at the weather, and we look at the anticipated fire behaviour. We look at the available resources, and we manage those through a type of co-ordination centre, which we call the Yukon duty room, and that manages those internal Yukon resources.

Those levels of preparedness are set. When I say “levels of preparedness”, that is the number of crews we would have deployed in certain areas of the Yukon, the number of aircraft, helicopters and air tankers. Those would be determined based on the weather and the level of preparedness that is required.

We would report in daily through the fire season with other agencies across the country to understand the level of preparedness across the entire country. We would then take advantage of those mature agreements we have under the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre to exchange resources as required.

For other emergencies, we would manage those through our emergency measures organization and our emergency coordination centre. Similarly, we would evaluate our level of preparedness that is required based on the given factors of fires or flooding. For example, last year, with the flooding we had, it was a very slow-moving event where we understood the significance that existed in the headwaters of the southern lakes, and we had enough historical data to understand that we were going to have flooding. We were able to resource, similar to what we do with wildland fires, and understand the risk and the resources that were going to be required, and we dedicated those resources.

Of course, we are not used to having these competing climate emergencies that we've undergone in the Yukon of fires and floods at the same time. We did initially stand up the response to that flood with all internal resources, but as the fires became more significant and as fatigue set in with emergency responders, it became apparent that we would need some additional support externally, the type of manpower and human power that would be required to stand up a response and construct the temporary infrastructure needed. We built about a five-kilometre berm, and it became apparent that we would not be able to resource that in the Yukon.

First, we looked at our internal resources, firefighters and emergency response professionals. Second, we looked to the private sector in the Yukon, to companies that may be able to support, and we called for new employees. We also coordinated a significant volunteer movement to make that happen. The reality was that there were not 200 additional people in the Yukon available through any of those means to support us. It was at that point that we were forced to turn to the Canadian Armed Forces for that support.

• (1735)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: To Mr. Saugh, I've had the experience of working with the Mennonite disaster team in the floods in Winnipeg in 1997. They came in after the flood waters had receded and the military had left. You are coordinating a group of these types of NGOs. When you are doing your command and your organizing of who goes where, is it a matter of putting the groups in certain places chronologically as they're needed or geographically based on where the areas are hit the hardest? How do you decide who goes where and when a certain group comes in?

Dr. Daniel Saugh (Strategic Director, Canadian Program Manager, Emergency Management NGO Consortium of Canada): Mrs. Gallant, thank you so much for the question.

A response is a coordinated effort. We look at the strength and capacities that each NGO brings. We set up an EOC—emergency operations centre—and then we have our incident commander.

We look at what each one brings to the table. The needs may have to do with psychosocial support, meeting essential emergency needs, donation and warehouse management or in-kind donations. We are then able to tap into the unique expertise that each NGO brings and coordinate the efforts through them in a co-operative and collective way.

We start with that, and then of course they are able to bring that to the table. We have periodic debriefing sessions where we see what is being done to address the needs at hand and to kind of address and close those gaps. It's really about helping the people who have experienced that immediate loss and displacement by meeting those needs and then being able to assess or evaluate it periodically and—

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave the answer there. I'm sorry about that.

We'll go to Mr. May for six minutes, please.

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

I'm going to address my questions to Mr. Goodyear, please.

So far we've heard testimony advocating for greater investment in civilian emergency response capacity at the provincial and territorial level. We've also heard some calls for additional resourcing and dedicated capability in the military, whether that be in the regular or reserve force.

What do you see as the appropriate division of responsibility between the military and the civilian? What are those advantages and disadvantages? Can you maybe identify the limitations of each?

Mr. Perron Goodyear: Thanks, Mr. May. I appreciate the question. It's a great question

One thing we often say as NGOs is that if we're not needed, that's great, but we would hate to find out that there was something we could have done where somebody just didn't know to engage with the NGO community.

The NGOs that are part of the humanitarian workforce program funded by the government look at some of those requests for federal assistance and look at what the needs are. Is it something really specialized that only military personnel can accomplish, or are there capabilities within the NGO community where they could offer those things?

The majority of the time, we find that it's not necessarily only the military that can do it. It's just really about being able to rapidly get them on the ground. Because they are a federal resource, they're kind of that first go-to. The entire goal behind the humanitarian workforce program is not to have the military be the first line of defence when there's a request for federal assistance.

Many, if not all, of the NGOs within our consortium have a presence. They're not just national NGOs, but they have a presence in communities all across the country. Locally, they may already be engaged, and then other resources from within that NGO from other provinces or territories may also be engaged. Then it's adding another layer. Really, in many cases they're already there. There's just more that NGOs can do.

In my mind, investing in the NGO capabilities is a very strong way forward to make the investment there, as opposed to in specialized military forces, which can be used for other things. As I said in my opening statement, there may be roles that NGOs can play on their own. In other cases, it may enhance what our military can do.

• (1740)

Mr. Bryan May: Can you maybe talk a little bit about that specifically? What core capabilities are able to be filled by NGOs and a volunteer base, and which capabilities are perhaps beyond the capacity of a primarily volunteer-based organization?

You talked about timing and being able to get people on the ground quickly as one potential barrier, but are there particular capabilities? Maybe you can explain to us what those NGOs and volunteer-based organizations can tackle?

Mr. Perron Goodyear: It's interesting because most of the NGOs that we have experience with and that are part of our consortium have their everyday things that they would provide, everything from donations management to psychosocial support, food, hydration, all those kinds of things, but often they are also able to fill in the gaps.

Throughout my 15-plus-year career in disaster and emergency management, I've never responded to two things that were exactly the same and where the needs were exactly the same. It's also the advantage with an NGO consortium that often we will figure out if there is a gap, if there is something unique with this particular situation, and then which of those NGOs is best in a position to actually meet that need. It can be everything from those normal things to.... One of the recent examples with the humanitarian workforce was actually the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada, whose day-to-day operations are obviously doing search and rescue, but they were able to go into an indigenous community and do things like provide firewood, food, and those things into a remote community because they're very self-sufficient.

It really is a benefit of being able to provide additional expertise, because we're used to being able to fill in those gaps, and even if it's not something we do every day, we're able to ramp up very quickly.

Mr. Bryan May: The pandemic, obviously, has undoubtedly put new strains on resources across all levels of government, but particularly when it comes to NGOs in responding to emergencies. How have you seen NGOs step up over the last two years?

Mr. Perron Goodyear: That's a great question.

They're doing various things, such as assisting in long-term care facilities. It can be things like backing up some of the non-specialty jobs. It's not necessarily always providing nurses or health care professionals, but feeding residents. It's helping out with seniors care and school programs. For some of the schools when they were shut

down, I know that the Salvation Army's trucks went out and provided food to families through their mobile canteen trucks, their disaster trucks, because school feeding programs weren't there. There were even truck drivers bringing critical supplies—

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

I see Professor Leuprecht online. Thank you again, sir, for your flexibility and graciousness. I believe you are in Europe and speaking to us from there.

I'm going to interrupt our normal flow of questions in order for Professor Leuprecht to give his five-minute opening statement.

Professor Leuprecht, go ahead.

• (1745)

Dr. Christian Leuprecht (Professor, Royal Military College of Canada, Queen's University, As an Individual): I'll just make sure that you can hear me, Chair. Is that all right?

The Chair: You're coming in loud and clear.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: Perfect.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for the invitation.

As usual, I will make my presentation in English, but it will be my pleasure to answer your questions in either official language.

[*English*]

I provided a written submission with more detail, but I will just get some of the basics out of the way.

The Canadian Forces has eight missions. Of these, the five missions that involve continental defence and international missions have a force structure associated with them. Then there are three other missions that don't have a basic force structure and fundamentals. On the domestic side, only search and rescue has a significant force structure. The two mandates that don't have a force structure are assistance to civil authorities for law enforcement and the provision of assistance to civil authorities in non-governmental departments to respond to international and domestic disasters or major emergencies.

From that, I think you can infer that the Canadian Armed Forces has, let's say, a distinctly ambiguous attitude towards domestic employment. There are hardly any forces dedicated to it except for the disaster emergency response team. Then you have the army reserve, which has 10 domestic response companies and four Arctic response groups. Those are plagued by high turnover. Therefore, the general philosophy is that disaster and emergency relief missions can be carried out by troops trained for conventional warfare.

You have heard a lot about the fact that somehow the Canadian Armed Forces is over-tasked or particularly stretched with domestic operations. I would say that if you look at some of the data that I've provided over the last 30 years or so, most of these operations are short and they involve a limited number of people, primarily surge capacity by the general forces and lift capacity by the Royal Canadian Air Force. There are elements that were stressed, such as the health services, during the pandemic, but I would say the Canadian Armed Forces has been managing with the capacities that they have.

The debate is whether this detracts from combat readiness. Wouldn't it be better to have a civilian agency? If the CAF retains the mission, it should create a specialized force structure.

The broader context of this is, of course, not just disaster response. It's also the ability for civil defence, because we live in a dangerous world, so we need to have a capacity for deterrence and resilience that can also signal to our adversaries that it's not worth their while to attack Canada, because we have a civil defence capability. Several countries in Europe have gone back to much more robust capabilities.

How did the Canadian Armed Forces end up with the civil defence domestic component to begin with?

In the late 1940s, there was a big debate about whether the Canadian Armed Forces should even be doing or be allowed to do domestic missions. In the early 1950s, the Canadian Armed Forces decided to take on these missions because doing so effectively allowed them a bigger force structure during peacetime than would otherwise be the case.

There are important economies of scale associated with this. For instance, it takes a lot of time and money to train a pilot, so if you have the search and rescue capability, as well as the regular Royal Canadian Air Force mandate, then that means you have considerable economies in the organization, both for the equipment—that is to say, the rotary and the fixed-wing equipment—and in the ability to train your pilots so they can get their flying hours and so forth. There is a significant economy of scale here.

I am concerned that we do, I think, need a dedicated force structure for this. I previously proposed that this might be about 2,000 people, perhaps primarily the Royal Canadian Air Force, since they provide much of the lift capacity, and a reserve component of perhaps another 1,000 people who can work on disaster response, but when they're not needed for disaster response, they can assist with development, in particular of indigenous communities in the far north. I think there is a permanent domestic mandate to be had by the organization.

I'll just conclude on a couple of points.

One is that I think one of the things we have here is that we can learn from the response to the pandemic that the armed forces need to be considering just how far they can go in assigning a core role to the primary reserves without the government first addressing some of the reserve problems. The armed services should be asking themselves what their core role can be, left without a permanent formation and an occupational structure to support it.

• (1750)

The armed services need to consider how to address the intelligence fiasco and the long-standing need to develop and implement a domestic intelligence policy. That is to say that I think the pandemic showed the Canadian Armed Forces that this was the dry run for the big one, when you will have significant demands on the armed forces far beyond what we saw here. That could come in the form of a much bigger domestic emergency or the combination of a domestic emergency, continental emergency and international, regional emergency in terms of stress.

My concern here, and I will close on this, is the moral hazard that we currently have. All Canadians need to have a signal that they need to be involved in the domestic defence and resilience of the country. This is not something we can just give to an organization and pretend that we're done with it. This is the attitude that we take to the Canadian Armed Forces—that the Canadian Armed Forces is a job for people who go off and train—rather than seeing this as a whole-of-society approach that we need to take to domestic response and resilience.

The other concern I have is the long-standing problem of making sure that provinces invest adequately in critical infrastructure. The Canadian Armed Forces is effectively a moral hazard that they can fall back on, because under the Crown prerogative, it is the executive of the day who decides how to deploy the Canadian Armed Forces. There are very few constraints. Canada has perhaps the fewest constraints of any democratic country on how it deploys its armed forces. We need to send a clear message to the provinces that we can't use the armed forces so that they can underinvest in critical infrastructure.

The precedent here is how the Canadian Armed Forces and the militia were used for law enforcement in the early 20th century. Essentially, the militia got out of that mandate by going to a cost-recovery mechanism that effectively made it cheaper for provinces to run their own police forces. We need to work on a much more systematic cost-recovery model when we deploy.

The Chair: Thank you, Professor Leuprecht.

To add to the confusion, colleagues, apparently the vote tonight has been deferred, which means that we have more time than we initially thought. Let's continue on with our six-minute rounds.

To add to the confusion on the confusion, I have a private member's bill that starts in a few minutes, and I'm going to vacate the chair to my learned and very capable vice-chair.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, go ahead for six minutes.

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

I thank all the witnesses for their availability and their patience.

Professor Leuprecht, I am happy you were able to join us.

I would like to hear your comments and those of the other two witnesses on the following.

I talked to a previous witness panel about Mr. Leuprecht's suggestion that part of the reserve force could be trained specifically to respond to climate emergency situations. Between those emergency situations, the unit could help improve infrastructure in remote communities and work on preparation, impact mitigation or prevention.

Here is what one witness said:

The Canadian Forces have an overriding policy of not competing with domestic business and domestic economies. Calling in the military to conduct routine "economic development", for lack of a better term, would probably not be well received domestically.

I would like to get the opinion of three witnesses—the Government of Yukon official, an NGO representative and Mr. Leuprecht.

Is that idea well perceived on your end?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: Over the medium term, there must certainly be more capabilities in the private sector and civil society to meet those requirements. They currently don't exist in the Canadian Armed Forces.

At this time, there are two problems.

First, it would take time for civil society and the private sector to build that capability. The idea is to build a unit that could respond to emergency situations. That is the case in Australia, for example, where thousands of volunteers with the required skills can be called upon. Germany has the same kind of capability. That is something Canada could do, but it could not do it in the near future. I think it would take about 10 years. The federal government should provide some money to encourage provinces to do that.

Second, there is a legal problem. The federal government prefers to meet certain requirements by using the Canadian Armed Forces instead of collaborating with provincial or private organizations. There are some legal obligations involved. If the government responds with its resources and its capabilities, it means it can meet those obligations. So the legal context must be considered and it must be determined how to change it, as the current situation does not encourage that kind of collaboration.

● (1755)

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would like the Government of Yukon official to give me his opinion concerning the idea that the forces could compete with people on the ground, in Yukon. I am interested in hearing your opinion on this.

On the contrary, is it a good idea for a team of reservists to always be ready to participate in economic and infrastructure development in remote regions?

[English]

Dr. Daniel Saugh: I'm just jumping in here, if I may, or is that question directed to the professor?

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: My question would be for Mr. Burns, from the Government of Yukon.

Mr. Burns, did you hear the question?

Mr. Damien Burns: I heard it, but I will answer in English.

[English]

I believe you're asking whether it would be a welcome addition to our resources to have an equipped team of reservists to come and support us in more remote regions like the Yukon. I think the short answer is yes. I definitely think there's an enormous need for that type of resource to support a place like the Yukon. This is not to take away from our own internal resourcing, our important work with volunteer agencies to build capacity, and work with the private sector, which is also very important. The reality in the Yukon is that the response pool is so small that I think there are really important times when we would call upon a force like the one you're talking about, a specially trained emergency response type of reserve force that can come and really bring a comprehensive response.

I think the real value for us in the experience we had last year with those 200 armed forces members coming to support the Yukon was, additionally, that the agency was completely self-sufficient from a logistical sense. They housed themselves, they fed themselves, and they required very limited support from our responders and from the system that we had in place to feed and move around our own resources. It was really important that they were able to come in and work within our incident command structure as a wholly complete, trained agency that came with their own engineers and supervisors and complete structure there. That was very important, and that would be a very welcome addition to—

● (1800)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC)): Thank you, Mr. Burns. That's it for time.

Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

Mr. Desjarlais, you're next.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the honourable members of this committee for allowing me this moment to speak to your committee on this very important issue. I really want to thank the witnesses as well for being present here. I commend each and every one of you for your work in this field.

I, myself, have experience in emergency management in northern Alberta.

I'll give a nod to Mr. Burns. I'm sure you're familiar with what happened in northern Alberta in 2019, which was the Chuckegg wildfire. It was a massive wildfire that threatened High Level and Paddle Prairie. During that experience, when I was the national director for Alberta's northern Métis, we had a huge fire called the Chuckegg wildfire, and this fire ultimately destroyed 15 homes. Today, unfortunately, that same community is actually being flooded. They've been evacuated and are continuing to evacuate as we speak.

I want to just back up to 2019. In my experience in that, there was a whole series of barriers, I'd say, to indigenous people and their access to emergency services. Ultimately, it did require the Canadian Armed Forces to send two planes to help us evacuate that community. We faced immense difficulty in trying to make sure that we had the logistics and the capability to do that work. Of course, we organized, as many of you will know, at the provincial level first. We had a PAC council called, a provincial organizing council. This provincial organizing council invited us to look at ways and means to support our indigenous communities in northern Alberta.

What I found was a series of unique problems. I think a member spoke about it, actually, the need to ensure that northern indigenous communities have access to support, and I think it was Christian Leuprecht who talked about what role the Canadian Armed Forces can play in supporting indigenous communities in particular, which, to date, lack the critical infrastructure, the critical support systems and the critical logistical centres, to actually tackle the crisis we're in.

I mean this in the full sense, that we're in the age of climate consequence right now. Each of our witnesses has spoken to that fact. By patterns we know that these crises, these natural disasters, are going to continue to get worse. Not only are they going to get worse, but they're going to get more devastating in terms of their impact to our infrastructure.

I have a series of questions, and I'll follow up in my subsequent rounds on this point, but to each of the panel members, you have the same experience I do, I'm sure, in organizing support for communities in the north, or at least some of you do. What can we do to ensure that we limit the barriers and get direct assistance to indigenous communities, maybe by way of a federal program, that may not require the consent of the province, which was a barrier to those indigenous communities during that time?

We can start with Mr. Burns.

Mr. Damien Burns: I'm a little curious about the end of that statement, around providing those supports without the consent of the province. In my experience, it's really critical that all levels are working closely together. I don't see, in the Yukon at least, indigenous or first nation communities being separate from any of our other response, so I would always hope that the province is involved in those resourcing decisions.

I don't know if I have much more to say than that. I think it's important.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: That's fine. Thank you very much, Mr. Burns.

Just for the sake of time, maybe we'll move to Christian.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: I think that's a fantastic point, for a couple of reasons. One of the things that people forget is that doing any of this type of work in the north costs about 10 times what it costs to do the same type of development work, for instance, in the south. I think it's also lost on people that much of the infrastructure that exists in the south, of course, doesn't exist in the north. It is the state and the tools of the state that ultimately have to provide some of the resources that we would take for granted in the south, and to do it at a much lower cost.

This is why I think the state needs to be actively involved, and this is why I think of this sort of unit that can, on the one hand, be tasked with helping in the development of northern communities—and of course helping northern communities is a gain in terms of prosperity and is a gain on equality of opportunity for all Canadians—while at the same time having that unit be able to respond. When it's not needed, it can work on development issues in the north with particular communities, and when it's needed, it can flip to disaster response.

I just want to highlight, in response to your comment and also the previous question, that using the reserves to do this comes with a particular challenge, because the reserves are plagued by high turnover and an inability to reach certain training standards, and they're only available on a case-by-case, volunteer basis. That is why you need a permanent force structure, because then you can employ the reservists [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] on contract, who will actually be there for you permanently to be able to work on these particular issues, rather than this ad hoc reliance on whatever teams we can cobble together when we happen to need them.

• (1805)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Chair, how much time do I have?

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): You're just at the end of your time.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Christian, we'll come back to it. I really enjoyed that point.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): You will have the chance again. Thank you.

Next, we'll call on MP Motz for five minutes, please.

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Mr. Leuprecht, I think I know the answer already, but should there be a civilian arm of government trained for these natural disaster emergencies, like FEMA in the United States? What are your thoughts?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: Mr. Motz, if you look at my report, there are basically four models. The FEMA model is probably the most expensive and the least effective model that you can think of. No other democratic country has followed the FEMA model. I think it works for the United States simply because of the institutional structures and the significant challenges that the United States has in many places. It wouldn't work here.

What are the other options? The other options are, for instance, what Australia, Germany and most European countries do, which is to have a civilian component that is very significantly organized. For instance, the State Emergency Service in Australia has a few dozen full-time employees, but it has thousands of volunteers and expert capability to respond, such as engineers. When you need them, they can respond within hours—

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Leuprecht, I am going to cut you off, because you did answer my question. I want to get to a couple of other questions with my limited time.

Mr. Goodyear and Mr. Burns, during domestic emergencies, of the NGOs, government organizations and other entities that involve themselves in helping out during a natural disaster, to what extent are their efforts duplicated? How could that duplication be avoided and efficiently maximized?

Mr. Perron Goodyear: That's a great question, Mr. Motz.

Let me just say, from the NGO perspective, one of the rationales for the development of the Emergency Management NGO Consortium is that we are not duplicating services and, in fact, are working together.

One example I would give you is back when the tornado hit Ottawa and Gatineau. One of our NGOs was tasked with donation management. Another one also had expertise in that, so they just partnered together to work on the ground, as opposed to competing against each other. It is really about that collaboration, to make sure we're not duplicating and also ensuring there are no gaps in any kind of response.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Burns, go ahead.

Mr. Damien Burns: That's part of that provincial coordination or that main body of coordination that I think is so important, with the provincial emergency coordination centre or whatever other agency is managing the resources across those various emergencies. That's how we avoid duplication. That's how we resource the different emergencies correctly if they're competing for resources.

That coordination is so important to ensure there's no duplication. That's how we avoid it.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you for that.

When you look at the EMOs, the NGOs and the odd time when the Canadian Armed Forces are involved—and any other federal entities—how does co-operation and collaboration occur? Does that occur well? During the times when there have been co-operation and collaboration in natural disasters, what lessons have been learned from those interactions to improve that?

Mr. Perron Goodyear: I'm happy to answer that, Mr. Motz.

One thing I can tell you from my experience is that most of the NGOs, as well as other organizations active in disasters, work under the incident command system. We develop that structure with liaison officers who continually coordinate on the ground. We make sure we're sharing information and intel with one another to make sure we are avoiding those gaps.

I think one challenge we've seen is that since the closure of the former Canadian Emergency Management College, there has been no national model for the actual training of personnel. There's

provincial training. A lot of the EMOs provide it, but for the national-level organizations, people are being trained provincially, not necessarily at a national level. You're having to learn some of the different models, even of the incident command system—

• (1810)

Mr. Glen Motz: I'm just going to interrupt you there, Mr. Goodyear. I'm sorry.

Very quickly, because I only have a few seconds left.... I am a graduate of the Emergency Management College here in Ottawa, years back. Should our government focus on having standardized training for volunteers and stand-up forces, as Mr. Leuprecht has called them, so we're all on the same page?

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): Give a very short answer, please, as we're out of time.

Mr. Perron Goodyear: I also attended the Canadian Emergency Management College, and that was the advantage, that you can train with military, NGOs and municipal people all at the same time, and all receive the same training.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): Thank you.

Mr. Fisher, you have five minutes, please.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's nice to see you in the big chair.

Thanks very much to our witnesses, not only for their expertise but for their incredible patience with what goes on in the House in the 3:30 to 5:30 slot. Thank you all very much for your patience.

What we're studying is what this rising domestic demand poses to the readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces and its ability to respond to future requests for assistance.

Mr. Goodyear and Mr. Burns, you've both outlined the issues. You've talked about the incredible things that you've been able to accomplish within your groups, and you even spoke to building some capacity on how to be able to respond better in the future. You spoke about the large amount of federal funding and how that's a positive thing.

I was listening for what your thoughts were on the way forward, on what a model looks like. In your mind, is it the Red Cross, a special reservist entity or a private entity that's out there to take this pressure off the Canadian Armed Forces?

I'll start with Mr. Goodyear and then maybe go to Mr. Burns, to give us a recommendation on the way forward. I probably won't have time to go to Mr. Leuprecht, who's going to give us a different focus than what you two might give us with regard to NGOs.

How do you see this being solved in the future, as we know that there are going to be more demands on the CAF rather than less?

Mr. Perron Goodyear: I would say that it's certainly continued investment in NGOs. I mentioned in my opening remarks that some of our NGOs have received funding through the humanitarian workforce program. That's only guaranteed until March 31, 2023, so in order to maintain that.... I think it is about continuing to work with the military and CAF, whether it's a reservist group or the others, and have those groups, as I mentioned, with something like the Canadian Emergency Management College, training together and identifying those gaps, so that when those requests come in, it's much easier to see which of the organizations is best positioned to be able to meet that need, as opposed to the default being the CAF.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Go ahead, Mr. Burns.

Mr. Damien Burns: I would echo what Mr. Goodyear is saying. I think investing in the sector is incredibly important—into NGOs but also in those provincial agencies, municipal agencies and federal forces that we may put together. I think that investment is going to be incredibly important. It's not just the Canadian Armed Forces here that we want to protect from the increased burden; this is going to be a burden that's coming across the whole sector.

I think that coordination among those agencies is going to be incredibly important so that we can have a common operating picture about how we work and what roles we're taking on during various emergencies. I would just go back to that previous incident command system conversation. It would be so important to me to have that standardized training and standardized method of organizing ourselves across the country. That will become increasingly important as these emergencies increase and as the various agencies come into these various emergencies.

I would just point out that I think there's a very successful model to build on there with the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, which is probably decades ahead of its time in how it coordinates between jurisdictions on wildland fire response. I think there are a lot of lessons to learn from that agency.

• (1815)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): You have another minute.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Professor Leuprecht, you talked about others out there building robust capability with regard to—I assume you meant—domestic calls for support and calls for action. Who's doing incredible things in this world, and what does that look like?

I apologize; I know you had a submission a few weeks ago, but I don't have it on hand.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: One place we can start is the federal emergency response plan, and I think this picks up on the previous remarks. We consistently have trouble when we roll out the federal emergency response plan because people don't understand the plan, and there are agencies and people around the table who aren't familiar with it.

One of the things the Emergency Management College and more co-operation could provide is an opportunity to practise much more

regularly, in tabletop exercises, what the plans look like so that everybody is familiar with the plans and everybody knows what their jobs are and what their tasks are. That's something that is currently missing and that the federal government ultimately needs to force. We need to be able to coordinate effectively among our own departments, and everybody needs to know what their jobs are before we can go to NGOs, the private sector and other entities and have them pile on, in terms of coordination. I think there's some work that we need to do right here.

Of course, the other concern has to do with the provinces and territories. In January 2021, when the Canadian Armed Forces was deployed to Newfoundland and tried to coordinate, they discovered that Newfoundland had stood down its emergency measures organization because it couldn't fund it. There are considerable asymmetries across the provinces and territories, and it's important that the federal government make sure that all provinces maintain a certain capability, particularly, perhaps, the smaller provinces, which already have less capability to respond to begin with but have disproportionate challenges, for instance all of the Atlantic provinces.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): Thank you.

MP Normandin, it's your turn, for two and a half minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's nice to see you.

I want to follow up on Mr. Motz's question and the answer that Mr. Fisher was given. It had to do with training.

Since the Canadian Armed Forces will likely be called upon more and more to respond to national emergencies and, above all, climate emergencies, what training is most important for members to receive?

Do CAF members have access to training that gives them the skills to respond appropriately in those situations?

What training development needs to be prioritized for CAF members, who, in all likelihood, will be called upon to provide support?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: The CAF takes for granted that the experience and training gained during Operation Kinetic, which took place internationally and on the continent, are sufficient to respond to requests on Canadian soil.

As I said the last time I appeared before the committee, the biggest training-related challenge is that the CAF has reached only 85% of its operational capacity from a human resources standpoint. That is due to barriers in the training system.

First, it's important to make sure that enough people join the CAF. Then, it's important to make sure that there are enough resources to provide general training to CAF members and officers. If general training is already problematic, that certainly means there are gaps in specialized training and the experience required for domestic deployments.

Ms. Christine Normandin: In the same vein, if additional training is required to ensure better response to climate emergencies, should more individual training be provided to members being deployed or to those in charge of the operational component of the response?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: If I understand correctly, you're asking whether the expertise required is specialized as opposed to general.

Certainly, the operations are increasingly complex, in terms of both number and type. After all, they are human security operations.

The CAF has to meet a greater number of human security demands internationally. When it comes to ensuring that the CAF has the capacity to respond to human security needs domestically and abroad, the training required is complementary in a number of important ways.

• (1820)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): MP Desjarlais, you have two and a half minutes. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thanks again to the witnesses for their responses.

I want to return to you, Mr. Leuprecht, to continue our discussion on some of the parts that you mentioned in your opening statement about ways we can create more resiliency in light of the demand on the Canadian Armed Forces, and some of the existing programs to mediate some of that crisis. Of course, there are far more tools that have to be implemented.

In your opinion, is there value in having a dedicated force, like the one you are describing, that is tasked with responding directly to natural disasters, building climate resiliency and helping to secure and resettle refugees internationally, as well as climate refugees here in Canada, domestically? The Canadian Armed Forces has already committed to some of this work through the DART program. I'm sure you're very familiar with that. What kinds of capabilities would such a force need to make a constructive contribution to our allies when responding to crises, particularly environmental crises and disasters internationally?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: If you look at the data of why the Canadian Armed Forces is called on the most, it's for general labour, lift capacity and specialized expertise. Being able to ensure appropriate lift capacity from the Canadian Armed Forces and that that capacity is available when required.... By and large, lift capacity is probably not something that's going to be provided by NGOs, and the private sector is going to have limited capacity to provide it. This is always something that the institution of the state, either

through the Royal Canadian Air Force or other capabilities, will need to ensure.

There are certain specialized capabilities that we need to give very serious thought to, because the Canadian Armed Forces, for instance, doesn't have supplementary health capacity that it can simply deploy to the provinces. That's a zero-sum game where you pull people out of operations they're performing in order to deploy them to the provinces. We need to look very carefully at where these specialized capacities are that are effectively resulting in zero-sum games, to ensure that we have fallback capacity in the NGO and civilian sectors so that we don't need to cannibalize the Canadian Armed Forces from current operations where members are serving, domestically or internationally, in order to respond to immediate domestic urgencies and requirements.

I might add this. You're from Alberta, so you'll be familiar with, for instance, the Fort McMurray flooding challenges. This is a great example of critical infrastructure that doesn't get the attention it needs. It is years behind. A disaster could have been averted if we had stayed on time and made a commitment to ensure that it got built to protect the municipality. However, it wasn't a political priority.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): You have 15 seconds left.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: I want to thank you, Christian, for mentioning Fort McMurray. Of course, the infrastructure deficit there is massive, but I'll follow up again.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): Thank you.

MP Tolmie, you have five minutes.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for allowing me to be here today. Being new here, I'd like to get some of the concepts that have been shared to see if I'm on the same page philosophically. Some of my colleagues have posed some questions that I'm having some challenges accepting.

The way I look at it, having served in the Canadian Forces, the Canadian Forces has a mission, which is to defend our country. When I look at NGOs, they have a separate mission, which is to support in times of disaster and provide relief. Where the gray area is is that the military has the ability, because it has the manpower, equipment and flexibility, to help out the NGOs.

Would you agree with that, Mr. Goodyear, in some of the statements you brought forward?

Mr. Perron Goodyear: I would agree with that, Mr. Tolmie. That's why I often say that it seems that the military is the first line of defence, because it's boots on the ground.

As some of my colleagues have mentioned, it is possible that there are specialized skills that may require the military, but I think as a general rule, many of the things that are required during a request for federal assistance don't necessarily need the military; it is about having boots on the ground. In my opinion, NGOs can often help to fill that gap, as opposed to it going directly to the military first.

As you said, the military's mandate is to defend our country first. Many NGOs have over 100 years of experience responding to disasters and already have a presence in many of the communities from coast to coast.

• (1825)

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: There's a term that we use, "mission creep", where you take an organization and then your mandate starts to expand. What happens is that you water down your mission. The mission of our Canadian Armed Forces is to defend our country, and I believe wholeheartedly in that.

Leapfrogging from that question, Mr. Burns, you're unique in your area. Would you say the disasters you're dealing with or the issues that you deal with are area-specific?

Mr. Damien Burns: No, I don't think so. In the Yukon, certainly, we have a bit of a special context, given our geographic isolation from other parts of the country, but, like other parts of the country, we deal with wildland fires and significant flooding events, and we're seeing an increase in things like landslides and earthquakes that affect critical infrastructure.

No, I don't think we're unique. These are not unique problems to the Yukon.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Maybe I'll rephrase the question. Would you say that those issues that you deal with are reoccurring?

Mr. Damien Burns: Yes, I would say they are reoccurring. I opened up talking a little bit about that robust wildland fire program. That's because these are a natural part of our environment.

What we need to do, and what we are doing in the Yukon very aggressively, is pursuing a prevention and mitigation type of approach. We know that fires are going to affect our communities. We can build infrastructure to defend ourselves against that fire, things like firebreaks, fuel treatment areas that form natural infrastructure around our communities and can reduce that risk. Similarly with floods, when I look at the flooding that's been plaguing us last year and this year, and I look back into the history of Yukon, I see that several of our communities have had the infrastructure constructed around their communities to protect them.

That is going to be our solution here, recognizing that these are not problems that should surprise us. These flooding events, we have to recognize, are going to be increasing, and we'll have to have an approach that deals with these in advance. We can do so with infrastructure and with the right amount of focus on our response coordination.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): You have 30 seconds, Mr. Tolmie.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Okay, thank you.

I have one last question for the professor. With the idea that the military has a mandate and that we have some challenges across this nation, would you say that it would be acceptable to have a separate organization outside of the military to deal with this, rather than crossing mandates and creating grey lines?

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): I'll let you answer that, Professor Leuprecht, but we don't have much time.

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: There's certainly value in building that organization. I think that needs to be a medium-term goal. Most democratic countries have an organization like that—and Canada is a very large country with very few people and lots of challenges as a result of climate change, and other challenges—but I don't think it can be built in the short term.

There needs to be a dual approach: what we want the Canadian Armed Forces to do in the short term, and some response to this, and what the government needs to do in the medium term. When I say "medium term", I mean prevention and investing much more aggressively in critical infrastructure and in coordination with NGOs, thinking of the forest fire centre, for instance. Those are very good models to follow, I think, rather than simply saying the Canadian Armed Forces shouldn't do this, because, yes, we can say they shouldn't do this, but somebody will still need to be able to respond when people are in dire straits.

• (1830)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): Thank you very much.

We have Ms. Lambropoulos next, for five minutes.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all of our witnesses for being here on our panel today to answer our questions and for their flexibility in terms of time.

My first question will be for Mr. Goodyear, and I apologize if you've already answered this. A lot of our country is suffering from labour shortages. I was wondering if you could perhaps chime in on whether or not NGOs had difficulty finding volunteers and personnel, and if this is one of the primary challenges that you're facing right now.

Mr. Perron Goodyear: That's a great question. I think different NGOs have experienced different things. We did certainly find challenges, particularly during the pandemic, with people being able to deploy, with vaccination rates and all of that in the early days. In many cases, people want to support, and what many NGOs find is that when something happens there are lots of people who come out and try, and want to help. Many also work on some of that just-in-time onboarding of volunteers to be able to increase capacity. I think it's great to have that volunteer base. Many are more highly trained and are certainly willing to do that.

I would say that within our NGO community we have thousands and thousands of trained volunteers from coast to coast.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: That's amazing, and good to hear.

My next question will be for you again. What link do you believe should exist between the armed forces and NGOs? I know you've already answered this several times, but I'm speaking more from the angle of training. Do you think that NGOs and Canada as a country would benefit from the armed forces training NGOs in certain areas, or are the NGOs actually better equipped than the armed forces in this regard?

Mr. Perron Goodyear: I think it depends on the role. I think it's cross-training. I don't think it's either/or; I think it's both, and training together using specific scenarios.

Many of our longer-term NGOs already have a history with the military, dating back to the first and second world wars, of going and supporting our troops, so a lot of those relationships are long-standing. I think it is about cross-training so that we can look at whether there are skills that the military can teach to NGOs that can help out, and whether the NGOs also can help to cross-train or identify who needs to do what so that it's a little clearer what capacities are available.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you very much.

My next question is for Mr. Burns. As the government of a territory, you were mentioning that you often have to look to external resources in order to take care of the natural disasters that take place in the Yukon. You mentioned that the armed forces are your current go-to if you've exhausted all other resources. If this were no longer the case and the armed forces were no longer taking care of this or were moving towards more of a combative role and shifting away from domestic, what exactly would you recommend the federal government provide, in terms of support to provinces and territories, that you haven't already mentioned up until now?

Mr. Damien Burns: Thank you for the question. That's interesting.

For that one, I might go back and look at the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre model, which is a really robust method of exchanging resources between the provinces, understanding where each of us is in terms of preparedness and response need in wildland fires, and knowing what resources we can move across the country with those sort of pre-arranged agreements for how we organize ourselves in a response structure and how we reimburse each other. That would be one area of focus in my mind.

The other area might be something like what we have in the Yukon. I'm not familiar with whether this exists in other jurisdictions, but we have the Canadian Rangers up here in the Yukon. It's a reservist group. Perhaps some type of reservist group in partnership with some NGOs could be trained to provide that capacity.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): You have 20 more seconds, Ms. Lambropoulos.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I'll cede my time.

Thank you very much once again to all of our witnesses.

• (1835)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): Thank you.

What we're going to do now is go to two-and-a-half-minute rounds with Ms. Normandin and MP Desjarlais.

We'll start with you, Ms. Normandin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is mainly for Mr. Burns and Mr. Goodyear.

Given the increased number of requests, several witnesses pointed out that relying on the CAF was an option of last resort.

If the CAF was called upon more and more at the last minute to provide support in climate change-related emergencies, because no other option was available, what would that mean for you?

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): Who is that directed to?

Mr. Damien Burns: I believe it was directed to me. Thank you very much for that question.

I hope I wasn't too ambitious in my desire to listen to the question in French and understand it. I think you're asking me what I would do if we had to really make sure that the Canadian Armed Forces was the very last resort. I think that is important. That is how I see it in the Yukon.

I think it's necessary to make these investments in our territory and our province, have our own resources, well constructed and well resourced, and have our NGOs well integrated into our emergency response structure. I think it's very important from an economic sense as well that we consider our private sector in terms of how they can respond. There's significant money that can get spent, and there's significant expertise that we would like to rely upon and build. As I think has been mentioned too, there's significant energy and there are volunteers who really want to participate in this.

These are all resources we have to make sure are very well organized and available. I think that's how we make sure that the armed forces are always the last resort. I think what we need to do is make sure that if we are at the point of calling on the forces, they're there for us, they're trained in the way we need them to, to come and integrate into our system, and they are plugging those holes that we can't. As I said, I think that by the time we are calling on the forces, we need that comprehensive...like, please come take this whole problem away from us from a logistics, operations and management sense.

I hope that answers your question.

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): You have 10 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I would have liked to rephrase my question, but I don't think I'll have enough time, unfortunately.

Mr. Damien Burns: Sorry.

Ms. Christine Normandin: It's no problem.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): MP Desjarlais, go ahead for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I want to continue my discussion with Christian, if possible, from where we ended on that last question with regard to infrastructure.

To my colleague Mr. Tolmie's point, I think it is responsible that one day Canada take on the work of responding to the climate crisis, the work of adaptation and that whole...lifting it out of the Canadian Armed Forces and making sure they continue to do the job they should be doing in many other ways. In many aspects of this, they are the last resort for labour. They're the last resort for people who are going to defend Canadians domestically.

In the short term, I completely understand the need to ensure that we provide more resources to continue to do that work to support the Canadian Armed Forces so that they can continue to help Canadians in their most dire need when they are available. In terms of that future aspect, looking at creating the kind of funding and program and service core that are required to respond to these kinds of disasters in a responsible way, how long do you think it will take a country the size of Canada to do that work, and what kind of investment are we talking about with respect to GDP, for example?

Dr. Christian Leuprecht: You're not looking at a huge investment, because much of this, as our colleagues have already said, is run by volunteers. The challenge is that you need the right surge capacity at the right time. Currently, we don't have a good model to get the right people to the right place at the right time. The Canadian Armed Forces becomes the fallback, essentially, for providing that surge capacity until other organizations are able to take over when no one is stepping up.

It's not just with NGOs. For instance, you may remember that earlier on in the pandemic, the Canadian Armed Forces helped evacuate Canadians who were then quarantining on the Trenton base. That was supposed to be done by a different entity. That entity wasn't able to deliver on time, so the Canadian Armed Forces took it on, not because they really wanted to do it but because there was no one else to do it.

I think there need to be other people who can actually do things in a very quick and timely fashion. In that regard, to Madame Normandin's point, yes, we talk about the Canadian Armed Forces as a force of last resort, but if you look at my study, Madame Normandin, we have an increasing number of occasions when provincial and territorial entities are calling on the Canadian Armed Forces, even though we can demonstrate empirically that they have not exhausted all of their resources. Essentially, they become a quasi-emergency measures organization.

It's important for the federal government to draw a much clearer line to say that it's not acceptable for the Canadian Armed Forces to be used as a provincial emergency measures organization to supplement capacities. It needs to be a force of last resort. The problem is that this is increasingly not happening.

• (1840)

The Vice-Chair (Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay): With that, *c'est tout*.

Thank you to all of our witnesses. You have been amazing, hanging in there with us through all our changes. I know you're coming from everywhere from the Yukon to Europe. I have no idea, Professor, what time it is there. Thank you so much for your time and attention this evening. It has added greatly to our study on a very important topic. We are really grateful for your time and expertise.

With that, I will call the meeting adjourned.

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