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• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. This is the 32nd meeting of the defence committee.

Joining us today is Mr. Fadden, former national security adviser, deputy minister of national defence and director of the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service. He's worn many other hats as well.

Welcome to the committee once again. Thank you for sharing your time with us.

Before I ask Mr. Fadden for his five-minute opening statement, I'll bring to the attention of members that the Conference of Defence Associations has a Canada submarine capability series on November 22, which may be of interest to some members of the committee. I wanted to bring that to your attention.

With that, I will call on Mr. Fadden for his opening statement, and then we'll go to our round of questioning.

Mr. Fadden, you're on.

Mr. Richard Fadden (As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be here. I understand I'm one of your first non-Zoom witnesses in a while. If you're as sick of Zoom as I am, I am particularly pleased to be here.

I'm going to base my remarks on my experiences as the deputy of defence, but also as someone who has had some involvement in emergency planning and the machinery of government, because I think that's relevant to your order of reference. I want to start by making a couple of relatively general comments, which, I think, should form part of your deliberations.

The first one deals with time. I believe the past practice of the CF assisting with domestic disasters after the war, during the Cold War and afterwards should be set aside. These practices may or may not have been appropriate for the time, but the environment today is different. You must consider both the domestic environment—which you're mandated to do—and the international environment, because both will have an impact on what the Canadian Forces can and can't do. I think there's virtual unanimity today—think tanks, governments and everybody else—that crises and disasters will occur more frequently in the future than they have in the past. You have to accept this as a given. The last four or five years have demonstrated this in spades.

What does that mean in practical terms? That's something we have to talk about. I want to be clear that I'm talking about natural disasters in Canada, but also geopolitical and natural disasters around the world. The three of them are relevant to what the Canadian Forces could and should do in the context of your review.

If I can make a “machinery of government” point, the Canadian Forces are a specialized and closed organization. That's not a negative comment. It's a reflection of reality. Boys and girls join at the bottom and stay until they go at the top. It's a relatively specialized organization. They have their own culture.

One important thing, I believe, about organizations like that is unity of function. Asking the Canadian Forces, for example, to run a railway would be a mistake. Asking the Canadian Forces to become overly involved in disaster assistance, in my view, is also a mistake, because it affects the culture, but also because—as you know as well as I do, or better than I do—it affects their capabilities in an operational sense. Unity of function, I would argue, is very important. I think adding more natural disaster assistance, or confirming it, is problematic, at least. The idea of formally adding this kind of responsibility, or creating an appendage to the CF to do this....

I saw a press conference the other day. I think it was the CDS saying that a new sort of organization, attached to the defence portfolio, was under consideration to do this sort of thing. I think this would be a significant mistake. The Canadian Forces, right now, are under all sorts of pressures. They're not doing as well as they could be. Adding another function or organization to the portfolio would be a real mistake.

This is not to say the Canadian Forces shouldn't be the tool of last resort. The issue is that we're defining “last” rather loosely. I was saying to the chair, before he convened us, that it is becoming too easy for prime ministers—not this one, in particular, but prime ministers, generally—to simply say, “I'm going to send in the army.” We do this without talking to the provinces, municipalities and civil society about what they could and should do. I'll come back to this in a minute.

Having said all of this, what can the Canadian Forces do when dealing with disasters? I think, logically and intellectually, you have to divide this into three real components: logistical support, administrative support and manpower—manpower being the most immediate draw these days.

This is a really large country, and moving emergency supplies across the country is something the Canadian Forces can do. However, even if they can do it in the context of disasters, using attack helicopters to move bedding supplies across the country is not the best possible use of that very specialized resource. You have to do it in the absence of another capability, and that's something I want to stress. In this country, right now, we probably don't have another tool. I think this is problematic for a sophisticated, complex government like the Government of Canada today. When a disaster occurs, the only thing available to prime ministers....

• (1105)

I want to repeat it again: This is not a partisan comment. I would say the same thing under Mr. Harper or anybody else. If a prime minister only has one tool in the context of dealing with disasters, it's a problem, because I profoundly believe that we're going to have more of these issues over the course of the next little while.

In looking at your order of reference, it occurs to me that it's very difficult for you to deal with this holistically in the absence of knowing what Canada's broader emergency capabilities and plans are. How can you advise the government or how can you advise the House on what the CF should do in the context of disasters if the country doesn't know what the provinces have available to them and if you don't know what municipalities have available to them?

I was saying to the chair just before I came to the meeting that I was listening to the news. The Premier of Nova Scotia was very politely rapping the federal government on the knuckles for not making 1,000 troops available right now in Nova Scotia. I think he has 400.

To my mind, that should give rise to really serious consideration of the relationship between the responsibilities of the provinces and the federal government. To use the vernacular, I ain't arguing against using the Canadian Forces as a tool of last resort, but it's becoming far too easy to make use of them.

I think you need a general review of emergency capabilities in this country. It's something that we should have done 10 to 15 years ago. Again, it's not a partisan comment. Governments move on after disasters, and they don't often take the time to deal with these sorts of reviews. At a minimum, if you can't get such a general review, careful consideration, I think, should be given to the impact of increased Canadian Forces disaster assistance on its operational capabilities.

I am not a military person, but I don't think you need to be the chief of the defence staff or the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to realize that there is not enough operational training. There are not enough exercises right now. It is short of criminal to send our troops into potentially harm's way if they're not as trained as we can possibly make them, and I don't think they're doing enough today. If they're chopping wood, which they may well need to do, and doing other things to fight forest fires and whatnot, they're not doing operational training.

If many of us who believe that the geopolitical environment in the world is going to get worse are correct, these troops are going to have to be used internationally. I'm not saying that there's going to be a world war, but we already have a considerable number of peo-

ple in Latvia. We have troops hither and yon across the world. They are susceptible of being attacked. They need to be trained. They need to be exercised. If we don't look at all of this in the context of disaster planning, then I think it will be a mistake.

I mentioned that it's sometimes too easy for prime ministers to say, "We're sending in the troops." I think that's true. I've noticed recently that when the Prime Minister has made these kinds of announcements, he has said, "I'm going to send in the troops and the Canadian Red Cross." It seems to me that somebody somewhere needs to look at what the Canadian Red Cross and other civil society organizations can do or should do in the context of disaster relief to relieve the Canadian Forces from having to do what they're doing today.

Lastly, I think every policy file in this country has a federal-provincial component. This one is no exception. The principle here is that municipalities, provinces and then the federal government involve themselves in disasters. There is not enough coordination. There's not enough understanding. Also, it's too uneven between the provinces as to what can be done.

In summary, I think you should take into account the median domestic and international environment. Look for as much unity of function as you can with the Canadian Forces. Break down CF assistance into manpower, admin and logistics. Look at how this fits into the Government of Canada's broader emergency planning capabilities, and on desirability, look at the desirability of a national review of emergency planning, of which the assistance of the Canadian Forces in disasters is but a relatively small component. If we don't know what is available or what can be made available, then it's not reasonable to ask the Canadian Forces to train or not train for this function.

Thank you, Chair.

• (1110)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fadden, for your always insightful and articulate views that I believe are very helpful to the committee.

If there has to be an argument about the need for operational training, we need only look at Ukraine. The reason Ukrainians are putting up such a terrific fight is that Canada, over the last number of years, has trained those soldiers. They are really good soldiers now. We need to apply the same logic to our own people.

With that, we'll go to our six-minute rounds.

Ms. Gallant, you have six minutes, please.

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

Mr. Fadden, to the best of your knowledge, does Canada have an actual playbook or a plan to coordinate an immediate response when a national disaster, be it aggression from a belligerent or a natural disaster, happens? Do they possess one?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I don't think they possess a holistic one. There are subplans for natural disasters, public safety disasters and public security disasters. I don't believe there's a holistic one; there's a comprehensive one. That's one thing that I believe is missing.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: After 9/11, I thought that was what they were trying to pull together and almost mirror the United States—their Homeland Security and our Public Safety.

Do you perceive that there's an actual military threat to Canada? Does one exist?

Mr. Richard Fadden: It depends, I guess, on how you define military threat. I think there is a threat from the activity of Russia in the north, not that they're going to send tanks over the polar ice cap, but simply an increased Russian presence, possibly under the ice cap. I think we need to worry about this sort of thing, but we have three oceans and the United States. I think we need to be practical. The chances that we're going to be invaded are pretty slim.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

To the best of your knowledge, does the government as a whole or do even individual departments rehearse disaster response?

Mr. Richard Fadden: In my experience, irregularly.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Do they do tabletop exercises?

Mr. Richard Fadden: It happens. Absolutely. I don't think there are enough national ones. There are not enough federal ones in the sense that they combine all of the provinces. DND definitely does. They do. I think Public Safety does. I believe the Mounties do.

Do they have a consolidated federal one often enough? In my experience, they did not. Are there enough national ones involving the federal government and the provinces and the large municipalities? I think that virtually never happens.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Did that happen when we had an emergency preparedness college formally in place training municipalities and various agencies thereof?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think it helped at the medium to lower levels. It didn't really have an impact on the higher levels. It did provide the municipalities and some of the provinces with better-trained people. I think it's a bit of a shame that we don't continue doing that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: When 9/11 hit, was a government-coordinated disaster response executed?

Mr. Richard Fadden: That's a difficult question to answer, because initially we were pretty preoccupied with dealing with the reality on the ground. That was the case for some time. I do think a number of reviews took place within departments and between departments, so I think the short answer is yes. My preoccupation, if I can say that, is that we don't pull all of them together as well as we should, and they have to be kept evergreen. There's no such thing as a national disaster plan that's good for 10 years. They need to be updated yearly or every couple of years.

Again, I want to be clear that I'm not being partisan here. I think all governments become preoccupied with the problems of the day. You need somebody to be set aside at the ministerial level and at the public service level to say, "You have to worry about emergency planning, not about what's worrying you today". Governments, all governments, find this hard to do, because there are plenty of problems for today. But if we don't do more of this, I believe we're going to regret it given the environment that I talked about.

• (1115)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What about when SARS hit? Mind you, it's the purview of the province to respond to something like that, but was there a more coordinated effort in place, or was it even needed at the federal level?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think there was. I think the Department of Health actually galvanized itself relatively well. It did deal with the provinces fairly effectively. Afterwards, they did start a policy planning process to try to be better prepared in the event that we have epidemics of that sort. That was to some degree, I think, the first awakening call on the non-public security and non-national disaster side. I think some progress has been made there.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

Does Canada have an effective early warning system in place to detect threats by land, air, sea, space or cyber-incursions on our territory, and the ability to know soon enough to be able to protect our populations?

Mr. Richard Fadden: Chairman, if you're willing to extend this session for about three or four hours, I can answer.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Richard Fadden: It's a very tough question, ma'am.

You know, we use NORAD for air and maritime incursions, and I think it's as good as they have for the United States. I think on cyber-incursions, like most countries on the planet, we could do far better. In particular, I think governments need to collaborate much more with the private sector and civil society. The attacks today, unlike during the Cold War, are directed not only at government but at the private sector and civil society.

Is progress being made? I think so, but it's pretty slow.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Having been a public servant for Canada since the 1970s, you will have seen trends. You saw the steady attrition in the military after Lahrs was closed, so we were going down towards 60,000 and I understand that the goal was to get down to 40,000 troops. Then 9/11 happened and all that changed.

Right now we have a recruitment crisis going on, and the people who are in the military, as soon as they've done whatever their contract is, want out. They can't deal with this wokeism in the military, and the domestic deployments for some are tedious and not what they signed up to do.

The Chair: Unfortunately, you're out of time. I know you were just getting wound up there.

It's unfortunate, because I'm sure it's an important question. I can't extend it three or four hours without unanimous consent, which might be helpful for a response to Ms. Gallant's question.

Ms. O'Connell, go ahead for six minutes please.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much for your testimony here today. It was actually incredibly helpful.

I think in our last meeting, I asked the major-general whether he had a line of sight or there was someone within CAF who understood the capabilities of provinces and territories. You mentioned municipalities, and I didn't even go there, but certainly that would be a big factor.

I can also appreciate that in his role, he's dealing with the crisis on the ground in the current situation, and that looking at what provinces and territories are doing probably isn't at the forefront of his thinking. I also wonder—and I wonder if you have any insight into this or if it is part of what you think this review of emergency capability should be—whether that definition of “last resort” is getting stretched further and further.

Are we seeing provinces and territories just not increasing capabilities because the expertise is there when they call on it? Do you have any commentary on that, or is that part of the review that we should look at?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I certainly think a review would be very useful.

You will know as well as or better than I do that one of the challenges in government is making choices. I think without a shadow of a doubt that governments, including provincial governments, over the course of the last little while have cut back on their operational capabilities because they don't have enough money. They don't have enough money to spend on this sort of thing because it's not happening now. That's the point I was trying to make.

Every single province, if I remember correctly, has an emergency management capability or coordinating function, but a coordinating function and real operational capability are two different things. I think Ontario and Quebec have rather more than some of the smaller provinces, but do the federal government and the provinces talk periodically about this? Yes, they do. I would wager you a good lunch that nobody in the federal government right now could give you a comprehensive compilation of the capabilities across the country. That's true today, and it was true 10 or 15 years ago.

When there's a crisis, I think, generally speaking, we're very good at ratcheting ourselves up—we really are—comprehensively, but as soon as the crisis goes away, it stops.

Do the Canadian Forces have relationships with some of the provinces as to what they can and can't do? Sure they do, but if there's not much there to begin with, it's a problem.

• (1120)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

You mentioned that you didn't suggest that these capabilities become just another department of CAF. Do you have an idea of the type of direction then? Would it be some sort of national organization of provinces and territories? I would think there would have to be that federal component. As you said, there is lots of expertise within CAF, so if it's not a department with CAF, do you have an idea of what then?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I certainly agree with you that there needs to be a capability within CAF. The question is how big.

I think one of the issues that arise.... If I recall correctly, your next witness is from the Canadian Red Cross, and as I said, increasingly the Prime Minister is saying he's sending in the army and the Red Cross. I think one of the questions that need to be asked is what can civil society provide in disasters? Can they provide hundreds and hundreds of bodies? No, they can't. Can they provide the sorts of things the Red Cross and other organizations provide better than the military can? They probably can.

To my mind, it's a question of somebody somewhere looking at the federal capability, the provincial capability and the capability of civil society as well.

Some people argue that we should go the route of the United States with FEMA, which actually has operational capability for disasters, but a lot of Americans would tell you that it's not the success story that some people think it is.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

This is my last question.

I'm not sure, based on the timing in your bio—correct me I'm wrong—whether you were still advising during Operation Provision and the settling of Syrian refugees. I was curious about your experience and if there's any commentary.

There was a decision to have refugees lodging in CAF bases. You talked about unity of purpose. I was curious what that operational change and that experience might have been, if you have any commentary on that.

Mr. Richard Fadden: I was still there at the beginning. There were a number of plans put forward. One of them was to bring people in and put them in CAF bases, but then some fairly wise people said these people are being taken out of a war zone and they're scared witless at the sight of uniforms—it doesn't matter what the uniform is—so sending them to military bases was probably not the best idea.

Having said that, the military galvanized itself and had several bases ready to do it, but the system and the government of the day decided that, given where they were coming from, it was better to not use military facilities.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Welcome to the committee, Mr. Desilets. You have six minutes.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for joining us, Mr. Fadden. Your resumé is quite impressive. Come work for me. You can start tomorrow.

Seriously though, in a perfect world, who do you think should be responsible for these domestic deployments? The federal government, the provinces or municipalities? Let's leave the private sector out of it for the time being.

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think it should be up to all three levels of government. It depends on the particulars of the disaster.

If it's a disaster in Trois-Rivières that's relatively manageable, I think the municipality should be able to take care of it. If it's a major disaster, like the Lac-Mégantic tragedy, I think the province should take responsibility. However, there are disasters that call for the involvement of all three levels of government. That's probably not what you want to hear, but I would say all three levels should take on that responsibility depending on the circumstances.

• (1125)

Mr. Luc Desilets: Do you support private sector involvement for these types of disasters?

Mr. Richard Fadden: In general, yes, but I think we need to take a very close look at the kind of help being sought.

In my remarks, I said that using military helicopters was not the best possible use of a very specialized resource. Many companies in Canada use helicopters. If we do the kind of general review I suggest, we can easily reach agreements with some of those companies to use their helicopters for disaster response. That's just one simple example, but I think the private sector can play certain roles, as can civil society. The Red Cross, the Salvation Army and organizations like that can very quickly mobilize people that often have skills and experience the armed forces do not. I think we need to use everybody. Doing that efficiently will take some thought.

Mr. Luc Desilets: During the pandemic, members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the CAF, were deployed in various places, including in Quebec. Do you think that was appropriate use of resources? Were they assigned duties that corresponded to their strengths? Generally speaking, was it appropriate to call on them?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think it was, in the case of the surgeon general's resources, but doctors and nurses are not plentiful in the armed forces. It was appropriate to use that very small number of CAF members, but deploying members of the army, navy and air force that have nothing to do with health care was not appropriate.

If I remember correctly, army units were deployed in Quebec. It quickly became clear that they were able to provide support but could not be used long term. If memory serves, the Red Cross ended up taking over.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Do you think it was appropriate to make short-term use of army personnel to carry out PSW duties, for example?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think that, in a disaster situation, which that was, we have to use what we have. We didn't have a lot of options, so the best course of action was to intervene, provide help and withdraw as quickly as possible.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Earlier you talked about how politicians have short-term vision, they solve one problem and then move on to the next one. When it comes to this kind of thing, we need a long-term vision. If you were prime minister, what would you do?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I would do what I suggested earlier, which is establish what used to be called a royal commission.

I think we need a national general review involving everyone in a relatively independent capacity to advise the government.

Asking public servants to review themselves isn't always fair. People will try, but it's better for this to be done by people at arm's length.

I think we need an independent national commission of inquiry to review everything. Once that's done, the government will have to decide how to handle any resulting recommendations.

I know people don't really like royal commissions because they're expensive and take a long time, but sometimes you don't have a choice. After all, we've been talking about emergency management in Canada for two decades, but we haven't made much progress.

Mr. Luc Desilets: That's interesting.

What kind of findings do you think a commission of inquiry would reach?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I'm sure it would find that we need much more coordination among all three levels of government. Potential roles for the private sector and civil society have to be defined carefully.

Once that's done, it's a matter of allocating the necessary resources. One of the problems we have right now is that all levels of government are using their resources to deal with short-term problems, not to think about how to respond to a disaster five years from now.

I'm implicitly criticizing my former colleagues and politicians, but, in some ways, this is how it is pretty much everywhere.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Who pays the bill when the army is called in?

I mean, how did that work in Quebec during the pandemic?

• (1130)

Mr. Richard Fadden: If I remember correctly, the federal government paid for it.

Mr. Luc Desilets: All of it?

Mr. Richard Fadden: Yes.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you.

That's all, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): To continue along those lines, you were talking about how it's too easy for the prime minister of the day—whomever—to have that idea of coming to the rescue. It's really quite a political decision. In order to make this a non-political decision, this royal commission would be I think where you're going in terms of that recommendation. Beyond that though, would you recommend something like a permanent body away from that political decision-making process, away from that sort of “saviour type”, not turning your back on the provinces and all of those things, to continue to make those recommendations going forward?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think there are people now who advise the prime minister of the day and they do it, I think, as well as anybody could. In the end, the prime minister of the day has to be the final decision-maker, but I think he or she would decide on the basis of the tools that are available to him or her. Right now, most of the time when there's a disaster of the sort that we have in Atlantic Canada, it's the Canadian Forces.

I think Mr. Trudeau acted entirely rationally. He didn't have any other tools. They needed help and they needed it now. My argument is not that he acted illogically, but rather that he didn't have any other tools.

The inquiry that I'm advocating would, to begin with, do a compilation of all of the emergency capabilities in the provinces and the municipalities, because I don't think we even have that comprehensively. Then it would do an examination of the environments I talked about and make concrete recommendations on where we would have to, quite candidly, spend money to build this kind of capability. You may want to contract with the private sector or with civil society. You may want to say to the provinces that you're going to give them x millions of dollars to do a limited amount.

What I'm arguing fundamentally is that we need to give the government of the day more tools.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Specifically though, if there was more of a long-term thinking permanent body that would look at that, it would be one of those....

Mr. Richard Fadden: Yes, I think so.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: It would be made up of a lot of people similar maybe to those who are around the table now, but on a more permanent official-type capacity.

Mr. Richard Fadden: I'm sort of beating myself against the head because I'm arguing against my former colleagues, but I do think public servants have a specific role and they're constrained by the political environment. I would add to this review body some experts from the outside, because they do provide a different perspective. I think government is entitled to as broad a perspective as we can give it.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: You talked about the inclusion of the private sector. Some of the witnesses we heard from talked about moving this away from so much focus on the military because it is so costly.

Mr. Chair, I think you said they are the most expensive sandbaggers, woodcutters, whatever...yes.

That said, the private sector has a very specific purpose of making money. What would be in place to ensure that was kept under control, so that it was specifically and consistently for the public good and not for their own private interests?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I'm not against the private sector making money. What I'm against is the private sector making excessive money in the context of disasters.

I think the chair is right when he argues that they are pretty expensive woodcutters. If you use military helicopters to transport facilities across the country, given the way that over the years Parliament has insisted that the Canadian Forces account for costs, it is much more expensive, I think, than contracting with a private company and saying, “We need 10 helicopters and for the following prices.” I mean, I think you can negotiate reasonably.

In the interest of clarity, I'm a long-time supporter of the Canadian Red Cross. I've been associated with them for a while. They have been used over the course of the last several disasters at a cost that is not even in the same realm as the Canadian military. They are far less expensive because they use trained volunteers.

You use the private sector when you need things like logistical support. You use civil society, be it the Red Cross or the Salvation Army or whatever, which can draw on many volunteers, because they maintain those kinds of lists in a way the government does not. You use the federal government, or the governments generally, as a real last resort.

● (1135)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Okay.

Again, though, in the private sector, often those profits are primary. Oftentimes the argument with the armed forces is that they have specific training. You mentioned that they are trained effectively and fully.

How would the private sector be monitored to deal with that appropriately and not cut costs, so that ultimately their people are compensated and trained in the most effective manner?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think you'd have to go back to what I was saying in my remarks. You have to divide up the kind of support that the Canadian Forces provides: logistical, administrative and people. I think if you define precisely what you want from the private sector....

I'm using helicopters, because helicopters are used a lot in disasters to move people around. Canadian Forces helicopters are attack helicopters, by and large. They're excruciatingly expensive. They're expensive to maintain. People use them, in fact, because they are armed and they can go out and shoot people. They're not designed to move bedding. Whereas, you have private sector helicopters that are very good at transporting goods. We have any number of companies that would do that, so we issue a standing offer.

I think we would be making the wrong decision if we automatically excluded the possibility of using the private sector. I agree with you that you have to be careful. Not every contract that the federal government signs is as cost-effective as it might be, but some are. It depends on the circumstances.

It's either doing something like that or we're going to have to continue relying on the military. The problem there is that it cuts down on their operational training, and they're not getting enough of that, I would argue.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

We're on the five-minute round. We have a little more than 20 minutes to cover off 25 minutes' worth of questions, so I will be a little brutal with Mr. Motz and others.

Mr. Motz, you have five minutes.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): I'm sure you will. Thank you very much.

Mr. Fadden, it's great to see you again, and thank you for being here.

We've been studying over the course of the last several months, the military readiness, and we've seen some significant inadequacies with the shortfalls we have in personnel. We've now moved in to this study, and I think they overlap.

After last week's committee meeting—we had Major-General Prévost and others here—I received some correspondence from someone within the military. They said the following: “Perhaps some of our leaders are too far removed from the reserves to know what's really happening. A division—and I'm not going to mention it—has lost over 400 reserves in the last three years because they're fed up with the governance mandate for the military. They didn't join to clean up domestic disasters; they joined to protect their country. We've never been so vulnerable and so woefully inadequate. Others countries are protecting our north because they know we can't. Championing the military will do wonders for their morale, because it's at an all-time low. Life on the base is very different than in Ottawa. If you want to get answers to your questions, ask those on the base, not Ottawa.”

What are your thoughts to those comments coming from our own members of the armed forces?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think there's some truth to it, but there are also some limitations. If you're a colonel on a base, you don't look at the broader situation, so I think what you need is a combination of the base-level perspective with the NDHQ perspective. Neither is complete without the other.

One of the things that struck me when I was at DND was that all of the more junior people told me they hated being in garrison. They didn't join to be sitting on bases. They just hate it. They want to go to Latvia. They want to go to Ukraine. They want to help with the disaster in Indonesia, but our capabilities now are becoming so limited that the likelihood of their doing that is less than it used to be.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you for those comments.

I agree with you on the military being used as a last resort. I think “last resort” has become too easy a term to be stretched.

You mentioned, with Ms. Gallant, some comments about the Canadian Emergency Management College. I happen to be a graduate of that place, and it had tremendous learning there, which I was able to apply in some disasters in my own community.

Do you think it's possible, when you look at the totality of the economic impact of a disaster and the cost to then clean it up, that we'd actually save taxpayer dollars federally if the government could stand that college up again and invite our provinces, our municipalities, our NGOs and our civilian organizations to increase the civilian capacity? In so doing, do you think the need for the federal government to come to the rescue, if you will, of some places would be mitigated?

Do you see the long-term gain in something like that?

• (1140)

Mr. Richard Fadden: Yes, I absolutely do. A solution to the entire problem it's not, but it's a solution for a big chunk of it. I think the model should be a national college—not a federal one—with the federal government perhaps taking the lead, but you know, provinces don't particularly always enjoy joining federal institutions and, as they say, “being told what to do and how to do it”.

It's a bit like the national police college. It's run by the RCMP, but it really is nationally administered by all the police forces in the country.

I absolutely think it would be worthwhile. It would need to have its mandate carefully defined and to be resourced adequately. We have a bad habit in this country of creating institutions and then not resourcing them adequately, at least initially when we're setting them up.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you.

When you look at disasters now, with the disaster down east with this hurricane, there might be questions asked on overlap, on duplication. When we're talking about using NGOs, federal resources and government organizations, there are sometimes duplications. Is there a way that we could avoid that and be more efficient in our response to these?

Mr. Richard Fadden: You're going to accuse me of being repetitious, but I think we need a compilation of what resources are actually available on the ground right now, because I don't think.... Unless things have really changed a great deal in the two or three years since I left government, we don't have that compilation. How can you plan to avoid overlap if you don't know what's available to begin with, except on the ground, where, hopefully, the senior person would say, “For the love of God, you're both doing the same thing—go in an opposite direction”? To start, we need a compilation of what's available.

I'm sorry, Chair.

The Chair: That's all right. I don't mind taking it out on Mr. Motz.

[*Translation*]

You have five minutes, Mr. Robillard.

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Good morning, everyone.

Mr. Fadden, how long would it take to set up and train a civilian organization that would have the same capacity and the same means as the Canadian Armed Forces have right now to respond to national emergencies?

Mr. Richard Fadden: It's almost impossible to have the same resources as the Canadian Forces because they have something other organizations will never have, which is people. When disaster strikes, they can put 30,000 troops on the ground to do whatever needs doing.

That said, there are logistical resources, administrative resources and emergency reserves. I believe the next witnesses are here on behalf of the Red Cross. I suggest you ask them that question. The Red Cross has emergency supply depots all across the country. I think those resources could be bulked up fairly quickly.

Duplicating the Canadian Forces' logistical resources, however, would take some time. Take, for example, the armoured troop transport vehicles that were used in Alberta when there were forest fires, and in the Maritimes. It's doable, but it would take a few years. It doesn't happen overnight.

Mr. Yves Robillard: How can the federal government do a better job of helping the provinces boost their resilience in national emergencies?

Mr. Richard Fadden: That's an excellent question, but I'm not sure I have a great answer.

Part of the problem is that, when the federal government talks to the provinces about these things, the first thing the provinces do is ask the feds for a cheque. I realize that's the best thing in some situations, but the provinces have responsibilities too, and they just need support.

Here's an example from the not-too-distant past. In the spring, there was a water issue in Gatineau. I'll never understand why governments in Canada allow people to build houses and cottages in places where flooding is possible and, in some cases, likely.

That kind of thing can be done collaboratively by both levels of government, but there has to be political will, and that political will can't be imposed.

• (1145)

Mr. Yves Robillard: What can local, provincial and federal governments do to reduce growing pressure on the Canadian Armed Forces to respond to national emergencies?

Mr. Richard Fadden: First of all, all provinces and municipalities should be required to have emergency management organizations. Second, those organizations have to work together. For example, Manitoba and Saskatchewan should have an agreement to share disaster response resources. That should be practically automatic. Similarly, New Brunswick should be able to ask Quebec for help in case of disaster. That does happen more or less informally, but I think it should be formalized. Places like Montreal and Trois-Rivières should be able to ask Quebec for help.

That kind of collaboration should be required, with plans in place for that kind of exchange. That would be one way to improve things.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Desilets, you have two and a half minutes.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Canada is a relatively peaceful country. It's not at war with other countries and isn't likely to be. We're seeing more and worse natural disasters though, which is why some people say the Canadian Armed Forces' mission should be changed and they should have more training to deal with that.

What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I disagree.

We're very fortunate in that we're not at risk of being invaded. However, Canada is a member of NORAD and NATO, and it participates in the UN's peacekeeping operations. It could not be a member of those organizations if it did not have armed forces trained for military purposes. Is there a perfect balance? That's not for me to say. Canada cannot participate in the western international community without trained armed forces. The Canadian troops that were in Ukraine and those that are now in Estonia are very well trained and respected by their peers throughout the western world.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Do you know of any models or best practices that other countries use when responding to natural disasters?

Mr. Richard Fadden: To be honest, no.

One thing that makes Canada unique is its size. Emergency management practices in British Columbia would not necessarily work in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's just one example. No two countries are exactly alike.

I said earlier that FEMA seems to work in the United States, but that's the kind of extreme federal intervention that might not be welcome in Canada. The Brits have other systems. It would be good to set up a royal commission, as I said earlier, to look at international practices and see how best to use them here.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: For two and a half minutes, we have Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: You mentioned that FEMA has a lot of problems. Can you outline them quickly for us within two and a half minutes?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I don't know if I can do that, but certainly during the previous administration and the one previous to that, they did not act quickly enough.

What is their involvement? Do the States have to ask for assistance? Do they not ask for assistance? The distribution of assets was a problem. Like everybody else, they were probably underfunded because people like a peace dividend of one sort or another. If there's not a disaster for 10 years, people start saying, "Well, you know, we can cut back a bit."

I'm not an expert on it. I just know that over the years they've done some things really well and other things not so well. You'll recall that in Puerto Rico, two hurricanes ago, they were criticized quite a bit for not being terribly helpful.

To repeat myself again, I think you do need a mix of national, federal and provincial. If you put too much at the federal level, it isn't going to work. The provinces do find that frequently their capabilities are exceeded, so you need a mix of the two, which we accept here in principle. I'd just argue that we need to think about it some more, exercise it more and make sure it's more effective .

• (1150)

The Chair: Ms. Gallant, you have five minutes.

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

We're talking about attrition. To what extent does the steady attrition of our military impact their ability to respond to natural disasters when called upon to do so?

Mr. Richard Fadden: Quite simply, I think it does. The military, I think, will tell you that their main responsibility is to maintain their military operational capabilities, and there's a limit to what they can take away. They cannot move staff from CFB Bagotville or CFB Cold Lake Airport, which is dedicated to NORAD, and all of a sudden have them fight forest fires. There's a limit somewhere, so you have to draw on the reserves, which we do intermittently.

Largely, we have to draw on army units that don't have dedicated functions at a particular point in time, but the fewer troops you have available for military use, active military use and for training.... The generals will tell you that for each military person actively shooting a gun or holding a gun to prevent violence, they need two or three others in training and all of this stuff, so it's cutting back a lot.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay, so there's chronic underfunding of the military.

Do you think the chronic underfunding and attrition, based on what you've seen, is intentional on the part of the government?

Mr. Richard Fadden: No. I think, for example, that Mr. Harper was a wartime Prime Minister because of Afghanistan. I happen to agree with his decision to have us leave Afghanistan because I think the Canadian Forces at the time were terribly stretched. He and his successors did somewhat reduce the size of the military. It's another peace dividend. Did they do that intentionally? No. They did it to try to save money to use on other things.

I happen to think, in part because of my experience, that national security is as important as other sectors of activity. Various governments at various times take different views.

Mr. Chrétien did not want to be the Prime Minister when 9/11 occurred. The last thing he wanted was to ask Parliament to appropriate \$7.9 billion in the December after 9/11, but he was forced to do it because of the circumstances.

I do think that prime ministers and governments have their own priorities. I don't think we give enough in Canada to national security, but that's just me. I'm probably prejudiced because of my jobs over the years, but I think the change in the international environ-

ment is such that we're going to have to spend more time, money and effort on the sorts of things you're talking about.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

To what extent do fuel costs, access and capacity impact the ability of a province to deal with a disaster and the speed at which our military can provide assistance to civil authorities if needed?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think they all do because it speaks to the extent to which they have set aside reserves to use for emergencies. I don't think we do that a lot.

To give you an example, when I was deputy minister, the military desperately wanted to do more exercises in the Far North because we don't do it enough. I think the cost is four times as much as an exercise elsewhere, so one exercise in the north means they can't do three or four others elsewhere.

If you apply this same logic to emergency planning, where you have a relatively small amount of money available, and all of a sudden fuel costs, for example, are doubled, you can deal with it by pulling resources here and there, but if you don't have reserves set aside, both in terms of money and facilities, it does slow you down.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Are you referring to reserves in fuel or people?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I think you need reserves in everything, generally. Fuel is not a big problem in Canada, but you certainly need to know.... We didn't know that what happened in Nova Scotia and the Maritimes was going to happen, so it seems to me that logical questions to ask the military would be, "Did you anticipate, in one of your scenarios, that something like this could happen?" and "If you did, how many armed forces personnel could you have identified within 24 hours to move to the Maritimes?"

I don't know if they've done it. They used to do it, years ago, then they stopped doing it on a regular basis. Planning for emergency disaster relief is almost as important as the actual bodies on the ground. If you plan properly, it really makes a difference.

• (1155)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: We have Mr. May for the final five minutes.

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

Thank you, Mr. Fadden, for being here. It has been truly helpful to get your perspective.

One challenge in going last is that much of what I was going to ask has been asked. I want to take the time to review, perhaps, and pull this together.

You talked about not having the appropriate tools, and I think that's a good place for us to start. You talked about the division between the CAF and the NGOs that can step up, like the Red Cross. What do you see as an appropriate division of responsibilities among the CAF and those NGOs?

Mr. Richard Fadden: That's a good question.

In a lot of crises, you have a number of stages. You have the immediate relief. Take the fires in Fort McMurray. You had to put the fires out, and, by and large, the province dealt with that issue. However, you still have, today, people who don't have houses and what-not, so registering these people and providing them with immediate financial assistance.... I think an organization like the Red Cross can do this immeasurably better than the Canadian Armed Forces, because it's just not in the CF headspace. Moving firefighting equipment from Quebec to help in Alberta.... The armed forces are going to be able to do this better than the Red Cross or any other organization, because they have the physical assets.

It depends on the particular element you're talking about. One question, earlier, was about the assistance provided in Quebec to long-term care homes. I think, in the very short term, they did not have an alternative, so they used the army. To the extent they used the surgeon general's resources, it made sense, but using infantrymen to work in long-term care homes is not good. It's not good for the long-term care home, and it's not good for the people in the long-term care home.

Using people from the Red Cross or another NGO is immeasurably better, particularly because these people are better prepared, in some ways, than the government. The Red Cross maintains long lists, in all the provinces, of people willing to volunteer—general-purpose volunteers, like I would be, but also trauma surgeons. Using that capability, broadly defined.... They're up next here. I think they're your next witness. It will be interesting to see what they say, but I don't think using the logistical support of the military to move people is going to go away. Old-fashioned manpower, where you just need bodies.... They have the bodies—the more general-purpose bodies.

I'm sorry. That's a long and inadequate answer.

Mr. Bryan May: I appreciate that.

My background is working with non-profit organizations. I worked many years trying to manage large staff teams, including volunteers. There are a lot of challenges with that. There are a lot of limitations in terms of what you can and cannot do.

In your mind, is the reason why we haven't relied on volunteers to that extent, on a more regular basis, a trust issue? Is it because we can't guarantee we're going to have the right number of bodies with the right training on the ground to deal with some of these things, especially when they're so episodic? As you said, we didn't know, necessarily, what was coming in the Maritimes. Is it a trust issue?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I don't think so, really, but—

Mr. Bryan May: Let me rephrase it: Is it a political issue? We're hearing premiers saying, right now, "Send in the troops. We need the troops." They're not saying, "Send in the Red Cross."

Mr. Richard Fadden: No, because in this particular circumstance, the Red Cross can't cut wood. They could, however, register people who don't have electricity and provide them with immediate financial assistance better than the forces could. It depends on the particular function.

I don't think it's a question of trust, to go back to your earlier way of putting it. I think they haven't used them as much as they could have because they didn't have to. Disasters are occurring much more frequently now, and I think it's forcing everybody to think, "Oh my God."

If you ask both the military and the Red Cross, for example, who did what during COVID—and not just the military, if you ask PHAC, the Public Health Agency of Canada—I think you will find that they found the services of the Red Cross met the standard they were trying to set without any great difficulty.

Again, like everything else, you need to plan, you need to exercise and you need to agree on who does what with whom. We're getting there slowly, because we're having to deal with it time after time. I'm a believer, as I was saying, of earlier planning making a big difference on the ground. That's what we're not doing enough of, I think.

• (1200)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. May.

That brings us to a close.

Before I let you go—and you may or may not have an answer to this question—the price per hour of a helicopter is staggering. It's absolutely staggering. I don't think the public has any real feel for that. This is probably an unfair question, but I ask it all the time. Do you have any recollection or an estimation of the price of sending in a helicopter on a per-hour basis?

Mr. Richard Fadden: I don't. I'm sure the military could tell you.

As I was saying to Ms. Mathysen, part of the issue with costing for the military is that, because of the preoccupations of Parliament over the years, the costing is utterly and completely comprehensive, taking into account all repairs, all upgrading and all facilities.

Going back to your question, if you're dealing with a private sector helicopter, you don't have all of that. They want to make a bit of money on the use of the helicopter for this time frame, so they'll charge you whatever they are charging you and it will be a lot less than what the military is charging.

The Chair: I know military accounting is mysterious to behold.

Mr. Richard Fadden: I was responsible for it as the deputy minister and I can't say that I mastered it entirely. It is very complicated.

The Chair: Mr. Fadden, once again, you have provided an intelligent and articulate analysis of this issue. I, particularly, appreciate it, and I know the committee does.

With that, we will suspend and repanel in a minute or two. Thanks very much.

• (1200) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1205)

The Chair: Colleagues, I call this meeting back to order.

Our second hour is with witnesses from the Red Cross.

Mr. Sauvé, welcome to the committee.

Amy Avis, general counsel and chief of recovery services, welcome to the committee.

Mr. Botha, assistant deputy minister of the emergency measures organization of Manitoba, welcome.

We just had our first taste of somebody in the flesh in the committee. It was positively exciting, but we're back to virtual representation.

With that, I'm going to ask the representatives from the Red Cross for a five-minute presentation. We'll then move to Manitoba for another five minutes, and then we'll go to rounds of questions.

Go ahead, Mr. Sauvé.

Mr. Conrad Sauvé (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Red Cross): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee, for having us here to speak today.

My name is Conrad Sauvé. I am the CEO of the Canadian Red Cross and I'm joined today by my colleague Amy Avis, who is general counsel and lead for our recovery, risk reduction and resilience programming. We are joining you from Ottawa, which is on the unceded territory of the Anishinabe people.

I would like to start by thanking committee members for your leadership in the timely study of Canada's domestic response capacity. My presentation is in English.

[Translation]

I can certainly answer committee members' questions in French.

[English]

Each year with increased frequency and severity, we're seeing the growing impact of climate change on Canadian communities. In the last two years alone, the Canadian Red Cross has responded to floods and fires in B.C. and to an annual flooding in northern Manitoba in indigenous communities, and our teams are currently on the ground supporting those impacted by hurricane Fiona in Atlantic Canada.

Unfortunately, these events are not isolated incidents. What once was a once-in-a-lifetime disaster is increasingly an annual event, stretching Canada's emergency management system to its limits.

When I started with the Red Cross, our emergency operations were almost entirely international. Today, 90% of our efforts are focused on assisting Canadians at home. At the Red Cross, we believe the time has come to stop treating these large-scale events as exceptional, and we must do more now to prepare ourselves for a new normal.

This must include seeking new ways to adapt, enhance and modernize Canada's response capacity and reduce the current strain on

governments and response organizations, including the Canadian Armed Forces. While the Canadian Armed Forces have always been there to help in times of disaster, they must remain the force of last resort and should not be the only permanent national surge capacity in times of emergency.

As we seek to address gaps in Canada's emergency management capacity, we can point to a few critical lessons that we've learned during the past two years in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to unprecedented funding from the Government of Canada, the Canadian Red Cross was able to build the first-ever humanitarian workforce comprised of thousands of Canadians across the country who were eager and willing to lend their skills and expertise. These efforts began in the spring of 2020 as part of a highly successful effort to relieve the Canadian Armed Forces in long-term care homes in Quebec and Ontario. The highly collaborative effort saw the Canadian Red Cross and the CAF personnel sharing skills, experience and lessons learned to ensure that Canadians were well supported throughout the transition. In fact, prior to our deployment, the Canadian Red Cross helped to train hundreds of CAF members in epidemic prevention control measures.

Since that time, this investment has resulted in more than 7,500 Red Cross personnel deployments to respond to more than 180 requests for assistance from federal, provincial and territorial partners. Even today, the Canadian Red Cross continues to deploy health human resources into communities to support COVID-19 outbreaks as well as ongoing vaccination clinics across the country, particularly in the north. While our country must be hugely grateful to the Canadian Armed Forces for their effort in responding to COVID-19, we have learned that, with strategic foresight, a continued investment in the development and maintenance of emergency health support is a role that organizations like the Canadian Red Cross can and should be trusted to play.

In addition to the gap in humanitarian service delivery early in the pandemic, we are also increasingly seeing gaps in civil protection capability, such as the critical work the CAF is supporting in Atlantic Canada. The Canadian Red Cross has recently studied a number of emergency management models internationally, including through discussions with our Red Cross counterparts in Germany, Australia and the United States. What we have seen, in terms of best practices for Canada, is an emergency strategy that clearly articulates predefined roles, responsibilities and capabilities for each actor. These are further strengthened with appropriate funding and coordination structures to ensure effective readiness and deployment of these resources.

• (1210)

While these models all include a mandate for civil protection capability, they also recognize and define an auxiliary role for their national Red Cross Society on the provision of humanitarian services. As we look at potential options for such models in Canada, we also caution that any model must be built for purpose, considering the unique risks, peoples and geography of this country.

The Chair: Mr. Sauvé, I apologize for interrupting, but I'm running a hard clock here. Maybe you could work in the balance of your remarks in responses to questions, if that would work out for you.

Let me turn to Mr. Botha for five minutes.

Again, I apologize, but the clock is the enemy in all of these hearings.

Mr. Johanu Botha (Assistant Deputy Minister, Emergency Measures Organization of Manitoba): It's no problem, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

Good day, Mr. Chair and committee members.

My name is Dr. Johanu Botha. I am the assistant deputy minister responsible for emergency management for the Province of Manitoba. I'm joining you from Winnipeg in the vast traditional territory of the Anishinabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and the homeland of the Métis nation.

I'll give a quick bit about me within the five minutes. I have practical emergency management experience as an army officer and overseeing emergency management in Manitoba. On the academic side, my Ph.D. focused on emergency management. My textbook on the role of all governments and the military in emergency management in Canada was published by the U of T Press earlier this year.

I think I'll skip to the end of my presentation just to capture the nuts and bolts, and then I can go back to the comments during questions.

While the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces prioritize their vision around national defence and the maintenance of Canada's sovereignty, backed by force if need be, multiple iterations of DND and CAF strategic documents have acknowledged CAF's ongoing humanitarian role in domestic disaster response to natural disasters.

This acknowledgement has, at least up to now, reflected the current reality, as provinces across the federation repeatedly call on the federal government for military support during large-scale responses, mainly to provide a pool of labour that can organize and maintain itself while executing an array of response actions. I should stress "labour", because boots on the ground is by far the bulk of the need identified by receiving jurisdictions over assets like helicopters and specific expertise.

The last decade and a half have seen CAF successfully integrate into the provincial-municipal-indigenous response systems on the ground during, again, large-scale disaster responses. Numerous events, including wildfires, floods, rains, hurricanes and, of course, the pandemic, have seen CAF provide crucial capacity, while en-

suring overall domestic disaster response remains under civilian direction and control.

The reality, at least from the research perspective of all large events, and again I stress large events since 2007, is that Canada simply does not currently have a large response capacity without significant heavy lifting from the Canadian Armed Forces. This does reflect an ongoing and growing trend to use military forces to augment national disaster response across comparable countries, including federal states like the United States and Australia.

From the research perspective on large-scale events since 2007, continued success in Canadian disaster response will likely require that the CAF, without, of course, undermining its primary mission of protecting Canadian sovereignty, be ready to deploy domestically to save lives and property from disasters.

The research is clear that, while some aspects of military expertise and organizational capacity can absolutely be transferred to civilian aspects of emergency management, the large, well-trained and, again, self-supported labour force that comes with a military deployment has no obvious replacement in the Canadian context at this time.

In reality, we work with our Red Cross partners all the time, and they're phenomenal. However, the volunteer organizations do not come close during large-scale disaster response, in part because military personnel accept and understand that they are subject to being lawfully ordered into harm's way under conditions that could lead to the loss of their lives.

While I'm not here to weigh in on any policy decisions, the emergency management research points us not to the question of whether or not to use the military in large-scale disaster response but to the question of whether the military has the ongoing support, capacity and, indeed, the morale to continue to support domestic disaster responses while achieving its primary objective of national defence.

I'll leave it there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1215)

The Chair: With that, we'll go to the six-minute rounds, starting with Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our guests for being here today.

My first question is for Mr. Sauvé. Thank you for being here.

I know the Red Cross has obviously a great reputation around the world. You guys are always seen as an honest broker that can be trusted. I know that when I chaired foreign affairs, we talked about you guys getting into Syria with the Red Crescent. It was one of the few trusted NGOs on the ground that could actually get in there.

Let's bring it back home here. Talk to us about the size. You said you have thousands of people. More specifically, are those volunteers, and is the size of your operation more specific to certain provinces? Do you have an overall breakdown of what you have in terms of numbers of volunteers and/or organizations provincially, and how easy is that to transfer, based on what's happening on the ground?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: Thank you for your question.

Actually, I heard a little bit of the last participant, Mr. Fadden, as he ended. If we take the COVID experience, and in some cases the volunteers and staff, it's all about what we are building the capacity for and what we are planning for. When COVID happened, we were asked to replace the military. We didn't have that capacity, but we built it to what was required. We built a partly permanent capacity to that response—it wasn't all volunteers. To this date, we have volunteer capacity throughout the provinces.

Throughout the provinces, we have presence everywhere. We have some interoperable capacity, so we can bring it from one place to the other.

I think a lot of this conversation here is—and my ending point actually to my presentation was this—understanding what the risks are that we're looking at and what capacities we need to build. Right now, we're using the military consistently for lack of being prepared in other aspects, like lacking trained local capacity and having that objective.

I'm not saying that in every case you don't need the military—in some exceptional cases you do—but it seems to be the only tool in the tool box. What risks are we facing and what capacities do we need to support and train locally? That's a mixture of staff, of course, and volunteers.

We're looking at the fire after the fire starts. We're not spending a lot of money building the fire station in the civil protection area.

Mr. Dean Allison: You talk about capacity and maybe expanding what you have capacity for as time goes on.

Would you just share with us the different levels of what you're involved in? We see taking money, obviously, for people and getting money deployed. You talked about fire. Talk to us about some of the capacities that you guys are involved in domestically.

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: Our major role domestically is in supporting. We're seeing that in the immediate phase of the emergency, such as in sheltering, which is at different levels with local and provincial governments. We've seen our role grow in providing immediate assistance, including cash assistance, to people who are being displaced. There's housing and then, of course, the recovery programs. To give you a bit of an idea of the scale, in the last five years, we've supported over 700,000 Canadians who have been affected.

The Red Cross is concentrating on the individuals who are impacted and supporting them in their situation. Of course, it's also bringing us into the challenges of recovery and supporting people who have lost everything during the months, and sometimes years, after an event.

• (1220)

Mr. Dean Allison: You have Red Cross emergency response units. Talk to us about whether you've used them and how often. Obviously, we've talked about a greater need in the future, potentially. Talk to us a bit about your Red Cross emergency response units and what they've done or what they are capable of doing.

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: Our main role right now is, again, supporting sheltering. Depending on the situation, not every population requires shelter. Some people will go to family and friends who are supporting them. It's that presence and that training in terms of that side.

What's been new during COVID was to provide support on the health side. This is where the military was asked to intervene. That was everything from vaccinations to the ICU nurses we deployed to our field hospitals that we built for international. We deployed four field hospitals, so we have a number of capacities there. Then, of course, we helped with the quarantine of Canadians and different situations.

We have an expandable capacity and we have a present capacity, but it's looking at what the risks are. In terms of our role, we're seeing the need to better prepare local communities in terms of what they're going to be facing. There's a need to better prepare Canadians in terms of the risks. There's a need for better intervening and having the systems to support them in terms of evacuations and whatnot, and better helping with the recovery, the mitigation and the early warning systems, etc. The Red Cross is involved very much on the people side.

Part of the conversation here has been about the boots on the ground and heavy machinery, which we're not involved in. However, our experience has been that there is often local capacity in the private sector. To give you an example, when we're talking about Manitoba a few years ago, we chartered over 250 small planes to support the evacuation of over 10,000 first nation members of different communities in the north.

We have the logistical capacity to use that, but in order to use the private sector, you need to understand what the risks are. You need to organize your inventory of capacities and you need to have them ready. The challenge is when you do that—

The Chair: Unfortunately, again I apologize, Mr. Sauvé. Your answers are quite thoughtful, but Mr. Allison's time is up.

I will now go to Mr. Battiste.

You have six minutes. Welcome to the committee.

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for having me at the defence committee.

First of all, for the Red Cross, Conrad and Amy, I have to say thank you. Thank you for all you're doing.

On September 24, as a Cape Breton member of Parliament, I woke up to damage that I can only describe as overwhelming, with trees blown down over power wires, telephone poles down, buildings with their roofs ripped off and other buildings that had bridges run into them from the flooding and the high tides that just made the damage unspeakable. All we knew was that we needed help. We didn't know where that help would come from. When you wake up to that disaster, you have all levels of governments trying to figure out where to go.

For any leaders who have woken up to this kind of disaster, I'm wondering if you could give us this very compactly: What is the role the Red Cross plays in comparison to what the defence department does?

If you could do that in about two minutes, I would really appreciate it.

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: In exactly that situation, our role is to support the individuals. What we're looking at in Atlantic Canada is that we're registering people. Why we're registering them is to have a direct relationship with those who are affected and to be able to provide financial or other assistance—including psychosocial, in some cases—to the people who are impacted. It's very much in that sense.

Of course, in the case of any kind of disaster, a number of people will be evacuated to shelters, and we, among others, are supporting municipalities in sheltering and supporting that.

Hopefully, the situation won't be too long for most people, but for some, they will be away from their homes for a longer time. In many of those cases, we will be supporting them with temporary or interim housing for the months and years ahead, and looking at how we can support the gaps in financial assistance that will be there as well. That's why we're raising money as well. It's very much about supporting the individuals in that situation.

• (1225)

Mr. Jaime Battiste: It's my understanding—we heard a bit of the testimony—that the Canadian Armed Forces were able to do things such as using power saws to cut down trees. Can you give us a little sense of what you understand to be the role the Canadian Armed Forces play during these disasters?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: In terms of what we've seen in the last year, that's why I've given the example: Is it the appropriate tool, the armed forces, for all these situations? Are there other capabilities on the ground—local capacities—that can be trained for this? Our experience is that there are always other capabilities—not in every case and sometimes the military is necessary—but because we haven't identified what those risks are, and we haven't looked at who can help in those situations, we're caught unprepared. Then we need a rapid response, which the military has. I think the other speaker from Manitoba said that very well.

The question is whether we have other existing capabilities. In order to understand that, we need to understand the risks and do that inventory. A lot of civil protection response is around looking at the capacities, because the first response is always in the community, the local community. Have you prepared them properly? Have you trained people properly? Have you prepared them to face their

risks properly? Then, after that, you have the response. I think we have to heighten that side of our response in Canada as a civil protection and look at civil society in that respect.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: Thank you, Mr. Sauvé.

One of the things the federal government said is that we would match dollar for dollar all the funds raised for Fiona. Can you tell me what we've raised so far and what the people in my riding of Sydney—Victoria can expect, for the next little while, the Red Cross to be able to do?

I know that the Prime Minister announced \$300 million for the long-term recovery, but for the short term, for the people who are throwing out the food in their fridges, for the people.... Eight per cent of the people in my riding still don't have power. What is it that the Red Cross is doing and how many dollars do you have currently?

I have about a minute for your answer.

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: Okay. I'm going to go fast.

I think we've raised, to date, \$15 million. We're in the process of raising that. We're asking everybody to register with us to look at their needs exactly and to see how we could use that money the most efficiently, again, complementing what the provinces are doing. We're looking at that right now. All monies raised will be there to help individuals and to also help local organizations.

The registration helps us—exactly to your point—understand what those needs are. Again, with the sums, we will distribute them to those who need it the most.

Mr. Jaime Battiste: With the last 30 seconds, if there are fundraisers taking place in Cape Breton, until what date do they have to get the Red Cross the dollars in order to be matched by the federal government?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: I'm sorry. If we receive donations, when will they be matched? Is that your question?

Mr. Jaime Battiste: What is the expiry date of the matching?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: The initial expiry date is 30 days, but I understand that may be prolonged. Presently, it was 30 days from a few days ago. In the next coming weeks all dollars will be matched, and we will share exactly how we will distribute that.

Again, the registration is key for us, because it's understanding the needs. Of course, we will use all of the funds to support those immediate needs and local organizations as well. We're doing that assessment now, at the same time as we're raising the money.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Battiste.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Desilets, you have six minutes.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for Mr. Sauvé.

Earlier, you may have heard our other witness, Mr. Fadden, who made a recommendation. He suggested setting up an independent commission of inquiry given the scale and complexity of crisis interventions that are likely to become more frequent.

What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: I didn't hear that part of Mr. Fadden's presentation.

I think it's important to take the time to really understand the events of recent years, the response to those events, where the gaps are and whether there is unused capacity in the community because of inadequate preparation. I think that's one of the important issues too.

I heard the end of Mr. Fadden's presentation, and I could not agree more about the importance of gaining a better understanding of the risks and being better prepared to deal with them. We spend a lot of time talking about responses after the fact, but I think lots of things have to be done at the preparation end of things. It's important to understand the risks and be better prepared to deal with them at the local level.

Mr. Luc Desilets: I have another question for you, Mr. Sauvé.

Earlier you talked about how 90% of your work is done in Canada, not abroad, as it used to be. Given that, and given your capacity to intervene domestically, are you in a position to respond to what's likely to be growing demand in the coming years?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: I don't think we will be if we don't invest more in our standing capacity. That said, I do have to thank the federal government because, after the COVID-19 pandemic, it invested in more permanent capacity. Investing in capacity is one of the important parts of the conversation.

Over the past few years, we've mostly responded to emergency situations. We'd like to do a lot more simulations, prepare for risks, prepare for emergency response and better coordinate our efforts.

We need to accept that these kinds of events are going to happen more often. We also have to invest in our permanent capacity, not just response where an event occurs.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you, Mr. Sauvé.

My next question is for Mr. Botha.

Based on your expertise, your experience and your university training, if you had to make recommendations to this committee, what would they be?

[English]

Mr. Johanu Botha: Thank you so much for the question.

I will certainly echo Mr. Sauvé's emphasis on greater preparedness, especially at the local level. Increasing municipal emergency management capacity through civil society and volunteer organizations, and preparedness at the individual level, the family level and the residential level, are all very important. But I would tell this committee that, even if all of that preparatory activity had occurred, and even if we had large-scale infrastructure mitigation layered on top to reduce disaster impacts, for large-scale events like we're see-

ing with Fiona at the moment, there is no obvious labour alternative to the Canadian Armed Forces and what they can bring to bear.

It's also important to note what makes Canada a bit unique when compared with such other comparable federal countries as the U.S. and Australia. The Canadian Armed Forces is the one operational player that links municipal, federal and provincial responses. Otherwise, we're very decentralized. If you deploy into a disaster zone anywhere in the country, nine times out of 10 you're going to see a lot of provincial activity with our EM partners. The one player that links all three levels is often those frontline soldiers and their chain of command. There is an operational matrix that the armed forces allows during a large-scale response.

My recommendation to the committee would be that, for large-scale responses, look to how CAF can be supported in terms of their capacity but also their morale. We've heard before that there is maybe a sense of not feeling a ton of motivation for domestic disaster response. As with combat, the will to fight on the humanitarian side will be very important. What is happening to enhance morale on the CAF side? I think the research is quite clear, from the trends from at least 2007 onward, that they will be needed.

• (1235)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you.

I have one last question for you.

Mr. Botha, do you think the Canadian Armed Forces are really capable of responding to what's asked of them?

I'm not talking about financial demands; I'm talking about operational demands.

[English]

The Chair: Be very brief, please.

Mr. Johanu Botha: Thank you.

Not quite at this time. I think we need greater capacity. That's clear, because the receiving jurisdictions almost always ask for more than they receive, especially on the labour front.

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you.

Mr. Botha, there's a question that often comes to my mind. There have been lots of conversations about different provincial governments not putting in as many resources—simply because of costs and abilities—into those emergency management systems, with a reliance upon the armed forces to be not just the last resort but the only one. There's a lack of tools and so on and so forth.

Ultimately, what is your response to the idea or the fact that there are certain provinces that are hit more often with the need for emergency response? I think of your province of Manitoba and the yearly flooding that occurs up north, and especially the impacts on first nations. How can the federal government play a role or help provincial governments, which have more of that needed response as opposed to others? How can we find that balance?

Mr. Johanu Botha: Thank you so much for the question.

From my operational experience, I'd like to note that, while a request for assistance for military support occurs essentially every year somewhere in the country, it's very rare for a particular provincial jurisdiction to be requesting support every single year. From the national perspective, you're seeing a lot of military activity to support domestic disaster response, but if you just isolate into one jurisdiction, it's not occurring as frequently as one might think. Operationally, if the Manitoba emergency measures organization, like its provincial counterparts, wants to issue a request for assistance, a lot of legwork needs to be done to demonstrate the true need. It's not an easy lever to pull, by any means.

In terms of how there could maybe be greater support from the federal side, as you noted in the question, I think it goes back to some of the risk assessment work that the committee has already identified as important. Where do we have cyclical hazards? Where do we have hazards that can be pretty much predicted? In those cases, maybe that is where provincial emergency management capacity can ramp up, be stable, maybe not expect federal support and have that kind of federal support ready for the "break glass" moments that we may not have anticipated as much—for example, the Fiona experience or the pandemic experience.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I'll switch to questions for the Red Cross.

We heard about the legal liabilities in terms of emergency responses. Certainly the armed forces, in terms of those unique capabilities that we talk about a lot, have that legal status or structure. They can go into those dangerous situations.

Can you discuss, from the Red Cross's point of view, whether you face a lot of those same legal liability issues? How do you deal with them? How do you separate those from when the Canadian Armed Forces come in? What are your experiences with that?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: I have with us our lead counsel. She's quite capable of talking about liability.

We responded, as we talked about earlier, to 180 requests for assistance from the provinces during COVID, where we deployed personnel in COVID situations.

Amy Avis can maybe talk about about our liability infrastructure. We work with the federal government and the provinces in that respect as well.

● (1240)

Ms. Amy Avis (General Counsel and Chief of Recovery Services, Canadian Red Cross): Yes, absolutely.

I think the Canadian Red Cross has an extremely high-risk appetite. It differentiates us from other NGOs, in the sense that we're able to assess, absorb and mitigate risk.

Absolutely we had to cross the threshold of risk sharing with different government departments in the context of COVID and other large-scale responses. We were able to traverse that, and in partnership with federal authorities find a way to risk share where appropriate. Again, we heavily rely on our capacity to risk mitigate and our high-risk appetite.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Okay.

Mr. Sauvé, you also mentioned the required training.

There were some questions I had before to previous witnesses about the armed forces potentially taking on that training. Would the Red Cross be interested? It would be part of that mitigation of liability, when you have those higher trained possibilities in the Canadian Armed Forces taking on the training-specific part.

Is that a possibility?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: You're asking the Red Cross training for...?

I'm sorry. I'm not following that question.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: When they're put into situations, talking about woodcutting potentially, or maybe something a little more dangerous—not at the high end where the armed forces would be necessary to perform it—would that be valuable, and is that training a possibility?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: You have to remember.... I said that the majority of our responses have increasingly been in Canada in the last few years.

The honourable member, in one of my first questions, reminded me of the past. We've deployed in Syria, and in numerous situations of both conflict and natural disasters. We've responded to a number of earthquake operations. That's an important part of how we maintain our experience. We have mobile field hospitals. We are experienced in deploying in complex situations.

I think you had a question earlier about events that are happening more and more often. I think it's right.

My experience in Canada is that we're starting to realize that these events are happening more and more. We haven't quite adjusted in terms of how we're preparing for that and understanding the risk. This is a new reality everywhere. Again, if the events happened once in your lifetime, then you don't feel like you need to set up a system. They may happen a few times in a year and you need to adjust. We're at exactly that point.

That's probably a point that Mr. Fadden was making earlier. We need to understand the whole response—

The Chair: Unfortunately, Mr. Sauvé, I seem to have a facility for cutting you off. It's not something that I really work at.

Colleagues, we have a little over 15 minutes to ask 25 minutes' worth of questions. I have a hard stop at one o'clock. Arbitrarily, I'm going to say that those with five minutes now have three. Those with two and a half minutes now have one.

It will be three minutes to Mr. Motz.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you, Mr. Sauvé. Don't take it personally; he cuts me off all the time.

Sir, you talked about private citizen donations. In this particular circumstance, with Fiona, the feds are going to match whatever public donations come in.

Can you explain under what circumstances the federal government actually pays for your operations?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: We have some standing capacity that's funded by the government. Some of it is also paid for by our annual donations. We have a regular presence of volunteers and staff who are already in all the provinces.

We also have agreements with the provinces and municipalities as well. In the case of Fiona, we're also working with provincial authorities to distribute some of their assistance. We're playing all those roles, so we have part of that standing capacity.

Overall, if we look at the threats that are coming, what we're saying, both to the federal and provincial governments, is that we need to increase our standing capacity and funding, not just in emergencies. Everybody wants to contribute to the Red Cross when an emergency happens, but a lot of our work needs to happen before that.

I think my colleague from Manitoba also mentioned the need for preparedness and local preparedness, which are critical here in understanding your risks. When we help Canadians who have lost everything, more often than not, they tell us they didn't think it would happen to them. How we're increasing our understanding of the risk and how we're sharing that is going to be critical.

• (1245)

Mr. Glen Motz: What I'm trying to determine is.... You have your public funding with donations, but you also get significant cost recovery, if you will, from the federal government.

When you send a bill to the government, however you do that, how do you determine what your expectation is for payment? How do you compare your organization's efficient use of taxpayers' dollars with other NGOs?

The Chair: I suspect that you'll be able to answer one question or the other, but not both, in 45 seconds.

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: Very quickly, during COVID was the first time we got standing core funding to maintain a humanitarian workforce. This is \$32 million in funding right now for the maintenance of our capacity, which includes some COVID response. This is new reality. It has been extended for a year. That was the first time. We did not have funding before in terms of a response that helped us with our standing capacity. This is a new reality.

Your other question is a good one, but it's a longer question in terms of—

The Chair: It's quite a thoughtful question, but it's still too long.

[Translation]

Mr. Robillard, you have three minutes.

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

Mr. Sauvé, how long would it take to set up and train a civilian organization that would have the same capacity and the same means as the Canadian Armed Forces have right now to respond to national emergencies?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: I can't answer that because we haven't yet worked together to determine what risk level we want to respond to, what events we expect to see and, based on that, what capacity measures we need. For example, it was an extraordinary situation, but we were asked to replace the army in long-term care centres in a matter of months, so we did it quickly.

We are maintaining a certain capacity for future risks, but it's impossible to provide a specific answer to your question because it depends on the risk level we're going to respond to.

Mr. Yves Robillard: When a domestic emergency situation arises, are NGO and government interventions duplicating each other?

How can we prevent that kind of thing from happening and make interventions as efficient as possible?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: Right now, there is very good collaboration among all the organizations in Canada. I don't think that's the challenge. The challenge right now is that events are becoming more severe and more frequent, and that's stretching capacity to the breaking point.

What's much more relevant to this committee's work is understanding that the army is being deployed more often because it's the only tool we have to respond to emergencies, and that civil society's capacity to respond to these situations has not been reinforced.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Desilets, you have one minute.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Mr. Botha. It's the same question I asked Mr. Sauvé.

Earlier, Mr. Fadden recommended setting up an independent commission of inquiry. What is your opinion on that?

Is that realistic? Is it relevant? Do you think it would be useful?

If not, what more can we do to plan and prepare for all that?

[English]

Mr. Johanu Botha: Thank you for the question.

I think if a commission shines greater light on this emergency management disaster response base, because it is a complex policy area and growing, then I think it can be only good. Everyone who works in my field would agree. I think the committee can appreciate that those kinds of bodies will probably not lead to short-term or medium-term solutions. I think more practically the kinds of suggestions that Mr. Sauvé has emphasized from a preparedness perspective, enhancing civilian emergency management capacity, are all very good ones that the provinces and the federal government should look at.

I would just caution, as I think I have throughout, not to throw out the baby with the bathwater, because there is a certain tier, a certain level of support, that we won't be able to replace that the military has.

• (1250)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sauvé.

Ms. Mathysen, you have one minute, please.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: We've talked a lot about the frequency of the need, the frequency of events that are occurring and the need for intervention. The Canadian Armed Forces have pay benefits, pensions, supports for their people. There are those boots on the ground. Obviously, there are so many incredible Canadians who are motivated to help their neighbours, to help people, but what are the biggest challenges when you're talking about that volunteer force? What are the stressors on them and how, when we're asking so much more of them in particular situations, do you manage that at a volunteer level?

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: There are stressors, but I think we've seen it in COVID-19 as well. Canadians want to help. The provinces that opened this up had tens of thousands of offers of Canadians who wanted to lend a hand. You can't organize that after an event; you have to organize that before, and train people. Just to balance it with a little bit of what I was saying before, I'm not saying that the military never should be used. I'm just saying this: Have we prepared properly and have we invested properly? We have never seen a lack of willingness of Canadians to want to help out in these situations, but how do you harness that help efficiently, prepare it and channel it properly? That has to be done before, and I think this is where there needs to be more investment.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

We have Mr. Allison for three minutes.

Mr. Dean Allison: Thank you.

Mr. Botha, you were talking about the different levels of emergency response, the coordination. You also talked about the fact that we do need the Canadian military. There's been some discussion about a FEMA-based type of organization. It's not always maybe the best, but it is an option.

Based on your research and what you've looked at in terms of chain of command and how we have multiple levels of government, what would be your recommendation, then, as we move forward? You did mention that's one of the benefits of the Canadian Armed Forces. They have that chain of command and it ties it all together.

In lieu of that, what would your recommendations be on how we tie all these things together—all the various levels of government?

Mr. Johanu Botha: Thank you so much for that.

In a nutshell, based on empirical evidence, I would strongly urge the committee not to consider a FEMA model in the Canadian context. The reason for that is that the key aspects of effective disaster response, whether that's information sharing, flexibility, support of each other, collective conflict resolution, clear roles and responsibilities, coordination, integration or trust amongst partners, all can be measured across disaster events. They have been measured. Our model, in the Canadian context, is not perfect, but we score higher on all those than our American counterparts, and a big part of that is the FEMA intrusion and blurring of lines of responsibility.

I would, in a nutshell, say, do not look there. The military is nice in the Canadian context because it augments but it does not come and take command and control. It's a resource that smooths out across the country, but it doesn't have this FEMA model of attempting to deploy into a region that it doesn't know as well as the provinces or the municipalities would.

Mr. Dean Allison: I have one minute. I don't know how you ask a question and get an answer in a minute here.

Mr. Fadden mentioned that, in terms of emergency response plans.... This is back to Mr. Botha, because this is what you've studied and what you've written on. Have we done as good a job as we could on emergency preparation plans and following through on those?

Mr. Johanu Botha: We haven't, but it might not be for the reason you think. We're very good at writing down detailed plans, especially at a provincial and a municipal level, but, as any good soldier will tell you, a plan never survives contact with the enemy.

As opposed to detailed plans that will identify any eventuality and then hope we have a response action that matches it, what we need are higher level plans that are exercised way more. This is at the municipal and the provincial level. We haven't done that very well. We're not very good at exercising our plans continuously. We're very good at writing them down; we have big tomes of them. I would say shorter plans exercised more frequently would be the way to go.

• (1255)

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. O'Connell, you have three minutes.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Sauvé, because we didn't get to hear the last bit of your prepared remarks, did you have additional recommendations for this committee to consider that perhaps we didn't get to? Given the short amount of time, I wanted to at least give you the opportunity to put that on the record.

Mr. Conrad Sauvé: Thank you.

Yes, and again, I agree with my Manitoba colleague in terms of the necessity to bring the military in as a last resort, but really to focus on a civilian response capability. I'm not saying the Red Cross necessarily in all aspects. There are aspects we play in there, but again we're using the military as a last tool.

The last comment is very important as well. Again, we don't understand our risks. We don't prepare our response capability according to those risks and we don't exercise, so we don't maintain capacity from one event to another and we're unprepared. This is all part of a larger culture, and I think it's an important part of civil society to keep the military last.

If I may have a few minutes, I'd invite my colleague, Amy Avis, who has looked at different civil response systems in three countries, to say a few words.

Ms. Amy Avis: I would just offer briefly that I completely agree on the FEMA model. In addition to the command and control, there's also criticism around its inability to reach vulnerable populations and working in that regard.

When we look at the German model or some of the models in the EU, engaging the citizenry is so powerful, but there has to be a recognition of the investment in local capacities. We haven't seen that globally, that balance between engaging citizens, having a specialized workforce, local capacities and reaching those at-risk and vulnerable populations.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: I would quickly ask a question of Mr. Botha. What would be the best way to engage with provinces and territories? What do they need from the federal government that would start this conversation in terms of building that capacity and having that joint partnership?

Mr. Johanu Botha: There is a fairly good relationship between Public Safety and the emergency management agencies at the provincial level across the country. One of the aspects we are focusing on as an initiative is a humanitarian workforce model and what that could look like.

The relationship exists. I would just say to continue to support it, but that link between Public Safety Canada and the EM side in each province is quite robust. Of course, it doesn't always include some of this discussion around the military and National Defence, so that might have to be fused into it. Every single EMO across the country has good links with the Red Cross, and we have these kinds of discussions quite frequently as well.

The Chair: On behalf of the committee, I just want to thank you for your presentations. Both were thoughtful and very thought-provoking. I'm sure all of us associate with Mr. Battiste's comments about the role of the Red Cross in the last few days and weeks in this last disaster. It has been very impressive, and I know it was very much well received, not only by the local population but also the Canadian population writ large, so thank you.

I know it's kind of trite but true when we say, "Thank you for your service," but in this particular case, thank you for your service. Both organizations have been very impressive.

Colleagues, before I bring down the gavel—witnesses you're free to go as you see fit—ironically, Public Safety will be our first witness on Thursday morning, and we're expecting other witnesses for Thursday afternoon. We also will submit the subcommittee report, for which I'll allocate about five minutes. We have to go in camera on that one, don't we?

A voice: It's not required.

The Chair: Okay, hopefully we will not have to go in camera, and then we don't have to do all that.

We just got authorization to travel in November, so start setting aside time in your calendars accordingly.

With that, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

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