



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on National Defence

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 033

Thursday, October 6, 2022

Chair: The Honourable John McKay



Standing Committee on National Defence

Thursday, October 6, 2022

• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order. This is meeting number 33 of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

We have in the first hour Deryck Trehearne, director general, government operations centre, Public Safety Canada.

Welcome to the committee, sir. You have five minutes for your opening statement. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne (Director General, Government Operations Centre, Public Safety Canada): Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to be here.

As you said, I'm Deryck Trehearne. I'm the director general of the government operations centre at Public Safety.

I just want to spend a little bit of time this morning talking about my organization, the process for requesting federal assistance and our very special relationship with the CAF and the armed forces. I'd also like to maybe give you a sense of the lessons we've learned over the last few years. As you know, there have been very significant efforts by my organization, the CAF and all federal partners with regard to COVID-19 as well as a variety of very major events of national interest.

[Translation]

We have a very special relationship with the Canadian Armed Forces, and we play a key role in CAF domestic deployments to respond to emergencies and risks through the request for federal assistance process.

[English]

Over the past two and a half years, as you know, Canada has contended with at least six distinct waves of COVID-19. We began, as you may recall, in March of 2020, by repatriating thousands of Canadians from Wuhan and from certain cruise ships around the world. We established a quarantine facility at CFB Trenton and then later on at Nav Centre in Cornwall. During this period, my partners in the CAF and I responded to significant seasonal flooding and wildfire events in 2021 and 2022, especially in B.C. last year, including unprecedented weather events like the atmospheric rivers in B.C. and the Atlantic provinces last fall, which created extensive damage to infrastructure. Those were followed by the truckers' protest in Ottawa, and more recently and ongoing now, we have damage from hurricane Fiona.

It goes without saying that this was and continues to be an unprecedented period for my organization, all federal departments and the CAF. Every Canadian, including every member of this committee, I'm sure is well aware of the impacts of some of these events, including those with respect to your ridings and your regions.

We have engaged RFAs, requests for federal assistance, in every province and territory multiple times during COVID and, in the case of some provinces, many times.

I just want to speak briefly about the role of my organization and the request for federal assistance process. In general terms, as I'm sure you've heard repeatedly, emergencies in Canada are a shared responsibility. That being said, the level of government best able to respond to emergencies does so, beginning at the local level. By far, most emergencies in Canada are managed at the local and provincial levels. It is when those emergencies spill across jurisdictions or require support beyond the capacity of a province or a first nation to respond, or there is an event in the national interest, that the federal government is then engaged under the relevant acts of Parliament.

Under the Emergency Management Act, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Minister Blair is responsible for exercising leadership related to emergency preparedness and response in Canada. The federal emergency response plan, otherwise known around here by its acronym, FERP, details how that authority is exercised. Within that plan, Public Safety, my organization, is the lead federal coordinating department for emergency response.

As you've no doubt heard by now, the National Defence Act outlines cases in which the CAF may be authorized to provide assistance in emergencies for public support, inter alia. In my world, the CAF is always considered a resource of last resort in Canada, and there must be ministerial approval and support from our minister and the Minister of National Defence before an RFA can be authorized.

The government operations centre specifically helps the Minister of Emergency Preparedness to deliver on a number of responsibilities including response and some preparedness aspects.

As I said, with respect to the RFA process, should a province or territory make an official request for federal assistance, there is a well-established process in place to manage that, beginning with regional contact with members of the GOC team and including inter-departmental consultation. This is often behind-the-scenes work that takes place before the formal RFA is received and as an event is unfolding.

Prior to the pandemic, just to give you a sense of the workload in Canada, the GOC—and by osmosis the CAF in many cases—was supporting probably five to 10 RFAs per year. I'm happy to report that since March 2020, we have now crossed the 200 RFAs threshold in Canada in support of provinces and first nations and territories.

Those RFAs were for public health supports, health care supports, vaccination rollout supports, assistance to law enforcement, national coordination and evacuation supports. Of those 200 RFAs, 157 were supported in some way, shape or form by the CAF or CAF rangers. In the case of first nations, at least 56 deployments of CAF rangers were used to support first nations during COVID and other events.

• (1105)

In addition to general RFAs, some requests fall under CAF assistance to law enforcement. You've seen some of those discussed already. One notable example was the support provided to long-term care facilities in Quebec in the spring of 2020, where approximately 1,300 CAF members supported 47 long-term care facilities in Quebec during the first wave of COVID. There were also supports for Ontario.

The government operations centre acts as a single window to access federal supports, as I said, including supports for primary health care, COVID-19 efforts and health human resources. The CAF is one of several federal departments, including Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, that created a single window in support of the COVID efforts.

As I said, the CAF is always considered a source of last resort for responses to emergencies within Canada. As a result, requests for CAF resources must undergo a strict assessment by my organization when provinces and territories ask for help. Things we would look at, for instance, are regional capacity, commercial options and other federal sources. We discuss a number of criteria with the province or territory before we get to a situation of deploying the CAF.

In addition, we try to define in advance which tasks the CAF will do that are appropriate to its mandate and capabilities, along with time-limited and response-focused emergency help. Obviously, you know that right now the CAF is deployed in the Atlantic provinces in terms of support for Fiona. You can see the types of work they're doing there.

The Chair: Mr. Trehearne, can you wind it up, please? We're over time already. Thanks.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Sure.

Obviously the CAF has demonstrated its ability to meet many concurrent operational requirements, but that's come at a cost, as I

think you've heard from a number of folks who have presented here.

One thing I just want to flag is that the government and Public Safety did create a humanitarian workforce program. They announced \$100 million early in 2020, and that's been added to since. You heard from Conrad Sauvé, I believe, of the Red Cross. The Red Cross, St. John Ambulance and others are part of that humanitarian workforce, which has created a strategic support for surge federally to take the burden off the CAF. That was developed in the midst of COVID.

I'll just close by saying that over the past two and a half years we've obviously had an impressive level of federal response in Canada for COVID and other crises. The CAF, obviously, has been at the centre of that. They have been outstandingly supportive and great partners in response to these large-scale events. Our federal capacity to respond, as you're all well aware, is finite. The provinces also have finite and very asymmetrical capacities, in many cases.

I'll stop there, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to take questions.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Ms. Gallant, you have six minutes. Go ahead, please.

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

Do you have in place—and if you do, please describe them—types of civilian task forces in case a major disaster is pending? For example, do you have a number of companies that have heavy equipment and workers that you could call upon in a time of emergency, just a whole list of them spread out across the country, should something befall our people?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: There are a number of ways to answer that question.

I would say that provincially there are workforces. Federally, there's the humanitarian workforce program that I just referred to quickly. That has at least four NGOs supported by the government to build capacity and to be ready to respond. That is something new in the last few years, as I pointed out.

In addition to that the federal capacity for contracting and procurement is available. We work with our partners at PSPC, in many cases to procure hotels or other supplies. I should also point out that you have the Public Health Agency of Canada with the national emergency strategic stockpile and other things. In terms of huge or strategic humanitarian workforces that are controlled federally, I would say, no, we do not have that.

• (1110)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Would it be of benefit to have standing contracts with people nearby so you don't have to go through the whole slow procurement process when a tragedy hits?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: As I say—and this gets into the distributed accountabilities in Canada where there are these shared responsibilities—oftentimes the provinces will have those mechanisms.

We also have, as I said, procurement, but it's emergency contracting. This isn't your typical “put out a request for proposals and wait” weeks in advance. This is something that happens, in many cases, in hours and days. There are emergency contracting authorities that the federal government can pull on and that the lead departments, in their areas of policy responsibility, do utilize—for instance, for asylum seekers or other things like that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Does the government regularly rehearse different scenarios for emergency preparedness?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: We do, actually, and we typically refer to those as “exercises”. I think there's a demand in Canada for more of these. There is an extensive list that is available across the federal government of the national exercise calendar. There are many hundreds of small, medium and large exercises that go on every year in Canada, but there's always a demand for more, because it's a great step in terms of preparedness.

For instance, the biggest one that's out there, which you may be aware of, is “Coastal Response 2023”, which is being done with British Columbia. That's about a major earthquake scenario. They have done repeated national-level exercises, including huge commitments from the federal government and my organization over the last few years, in preparedness for that potential scenario.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: When was the last time a whole-of-government exercise was held?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: As I said, the coastal response is the most major one, and that involves almost every federal department. We have elements of that that are called “building blocks”, which are going on constantly, and they will have their crescendo in February, in late winter of this year, in British Columbia. That's a national-level exercise.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: There were two exercises in the States pertaining to the pandemic that a number of countries participated in, and I didn't see Canada listed on them. There was one in the spring of 2019 and then one in the fall of 2019. One of them was called “Event 201”. Why would we not have participated in those?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I think you'd have to ask my colleagues at the Public Health Agency about their participation in those. If those were led by CDC in the public health sphere, they may have participated. I'm not really aware. I know that the Public Health Agency had plans and exercises that it was considering, I think, prior to the pandemic, but I'm not really up to speed on what the CDC did in terms of exercises.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: In your opinion, does Canada have an effective system in place to detect all the different types of non-military related emergencies that could be enacted by belligerents from other countries, even, for example, cyber-incursions?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I think we have a pretty good system. It's a complicated one in Canada, as you heard me allude to. There are multiple levels of shared responsibility. I would say that when it comes to what we refer to as “cyclical” events—fires and floods—these things are well known. The capacities of the provinces and territories to prepare and respond are actually quite good, even despite some of the events we've seen in B.C. in the last couple of years.

In that area they are quite good. I think some of my colleagues may have presented on the cyber-aspects as well, and I think there's a lot of work going on in that area. We talk about all hazards in our world. The cyclical are kind of the best known in Canada, and hurricanes now, as you can see, are something we're a little bit worried about in the future, as these things potentially become more frequent.

I think there is a very good system in Canada, but I think we've also been lucky historically, in the sense that we haven't had the kinds of catastrophes that other countries have had—

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

Mr. May, you have six minutes, please.

• (1115)

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

Thank you very much for sharing some of your time with us this morning.

You talked a bit in your opening about the partnership between the provinces, territories and federal government when dealing with these types of crises. Can you spend some time going into a little more detail on the process when a province or territory needs federal assistance? What does that look like?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I'm happy to go over that.

As I said, if emergencies happen and they impact the local level initially.... Think of the thunderstorm event in Ottawa a few months ago. In that case, the province did not seek federal support and did not ask to deploy the army. Ottawa managed that. It was mainly a hydro and infrastructure impact, and they managed it. Many events occur across Canada all the time that you may not be aware of. They occur locally, regionally and are handled.

If events begin to overwhelm a region or province, then conversations will begin between the emergency management teams in a province and locally. They may engage the government operations centre. We have regional offices across the country. They have very strong relationships with the emergency management operation centres in each province and territory. If something is overwhelming, say in the case of the atmospheric river last fall, there was an immediate response from the CAF for search and rescue and evacuating people from highways. Then there were additional conversations that were engaged with our team. We work with the province and its emergency management centre to deploy federal supports.

Of course, once the critical response crisis phase is over, there are a number of very strategic conversations that go on around disaster support and financing. You'll recall the ministerial working group on B.C. I'm sure folks have discussed that as well. Mainly there are conversations if the province feels that a region is overwhelmed. If something is of significant impact to the province, they'll engage our team and we will work with them to understand their needs.

As I said, in terms of the criteria of capabilities that are required, we'll understand whether the federal government has those capabilities, whether the provincial and regional assets have been leveraged and exhausted, and what private sector and public sector assets are available. That can all go on in a matter of hours or days leading up to a formal request for federal assistance.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you.

In your opening, I think you mentioned the number of requests that have come in. I missed that.

Could you repeat what that number is, in terms of how many requests we've seen in recent years? I understand, obviously, that there was a surge at the beginning of the pandemic for those types of requests.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: That's correct.

In the past, say three-plus years ago, we would maybe have five or 10 requests for federal assistance a year. As I said, we've now passed 200 requests for assistance in terms of COVID and all of the major events in Canada in the last two and a half years.

Mr. Bryan May: Is there an issue with capacity on the Public Safety side when you see a surge of that kind?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Yes, there are definitely issues. Our group is fairly small at the GOC. We worked a lot of long days—every weekend and holiday for the first year and a half of COVID, for sure. That's in terms of capacity.

To get into the bigger question about the federal capacity to respond, in terms of COVID, there were huge supports by Indigenous Services Canada to first nations, with all kinds of funding and capabilities. There was also the Public Health Agency of Canada, with huge efforts and expenses in terms of safe isolation sites and a number of other programs that I'm sure they've spoken about. Then there were the efforts of the armed forces, of course.

Sustainability and capacity is an ongoing concern. Certainly we've had to manage ourselves accordingly during this very pro-

tracted event of COVID-19, which is unlike anything else we've ever seen.

Mr. Bryan May: We met earlier this week with the Red Cross and talked to them a lot about their involvement in a number of these crises.

In your opinion, would the federal government be able to meet these provincial and territorial requests without support from organizations like the Red Cross?

• (1120)

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I think the Red Cross has a really important role to play. As I alluded to, this humanitarian workforce program that was set up in 2020 has taken a big step forward in terms of their capacity to help Canadians. They have always played an important role in Canada, with St. John Ambulance and others. We have search and rescue teams in Canada. There are a number of strategic partners there. They all have contributed to disaster response in Canada historically.

To answer the question directly, I think we've taken a big step forward in terms of that program and support to those NGOs to be able to respond. It has alleviated some of the burden off of the armed forces. Certainly during COVID, you could imagine that, in addition to vaccinators and things like that, when we were doing mass vaccination, health human resources, nurses and doctors were really in short supply. The Red Cross is a source for some of those resources. The CAF has very limited resources in that regard.

The Chair: Okay—

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: We all know about the provincial and territorial challenges in the health care system, which we won't get into here.

The Chair: Unfortunately, I'm going to have to leave it there again.

Just as a point of clarification, on the 157 calls for CAF assistance, what was the period of time for those 157 calls?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: That's since March 2020, sir.

The Chair: That's since March 2020, so we're talking about two and a half years.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Madame Normandin, please go ahead for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Trehearne, thank you very much for your presentation.

You talked about the criteria you use to assess whether a municipality or a province is running out of resources, and you said that the CAF is always considered a source of last resort. You mentioned specifically the material and human resources available and other possible solutions. I imagine that with each request for assistance from the armed forces, you assess the response capacity of the municipalities and provinces.

As we've already heard, the number of extreme weather events is increasing due to climate change. How has the preparedness or response capacity of municipalities and provinces evolved? Has it improved in the last twenty years, for example? Is it worse? Is it the same? Their capacity to respond is another factor to consider when calling in the military.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Thank you. That is a great question.

The capacity of Canadian provinces, territories and municipalities to respond to emergencies has definitely evolved.

[English]

Certainly, we have very strong provinces in many cases. Quebec obviously has a very strong emergency management capability, and I think many municipalities have evolved significantly over the last, say, decade.

As I said, I think historically as Canadians we understood that there were floods and forest fires every year, though we had not really had the massive scale of things they saw in Florida, for instance, every year, or in the gulf, but I think that's changing. I think people understand. We sometimes refer to that as EM—emergency management—literacy and awareness, and I do think that many municipalities and in particular many provinces have come a long way in the last decade. I've been in this role for a little over three years, and we've seen, even through successive waves of COVID, over the last few years the engagement, the capacity and the literacy in these organizations to respond—and that affects their demands for federal assistance. All of that has significantly evolved in the last three years. People, I think, have really woken up to the fact of the challenge and have resourced it adequately.

We've had major events in which provinces have said, “No, it's fine. We have this under control. We don't need your help”, and that's the kind of thing we like to see. But I'll stop there.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

Earlier this week, Mr. Fadden suggested doing an inventory of material and human resources to determine the state of preparedness of the provinces and municipalities. The greater their capacity to respond to emergencies, the less likely they are to need assistance from the military.

What do you think of this idea of doing a comprehensive review of the response capacity and the resources available?

• (1125)

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I think that is an excellent idea.

[English]

I do think the federal government—Public Safety and other departments—has been considering exactly that kind of work. We sometimes refer to that as the core Canadian capability list or perhaps initially a federal capability list. There is a need, I think, in Canada and there is work under way with Public Safety, which my colleagues can comment on—I'm not leading it—that is certainly looking at that issue, and doing so nationally, to understand the capabilities. I think one of the previous members asked about a list of who to call and about understanding exactly what capabilities are where in Canada. We know that federally. The CAF knows that intimately with their assets. However, I think the question on the table is about the total capability across Canada and whether it is adequate with respect to the trends we're seeing.

[Translation]

Thank you. That was a great question.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

When Mr. Fadden was asked who should be responsible for crisis management, he said it depends on the size of the crisis. It could be the municipality, the province or the federal government.

How would you answer that question?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I would answer exactly the same as Mr. Fadden. As I said before, this is a shared responsibility in Canada.

[English]

It's very Canadian. We have 13 provinces and territories, and then the federal government. The capabilities are very asymmetrical, as you can imagine. It really depends on the type of event.

There's a little bit of science and a little bit of art at the initial stages of an event to understand what supports are required and whether the province, the territory... We saw significant flooding in the territories this summer. In many cases, they did not call on the federal government for support, but last year, they did. British Columbia had significant wildfires this year but had a third of the impacts they saw last year, when there was significant federal support, including the deployment of the armed forces.

It really depends on the situation. We all have our roles. It's difficult to say that one group should call all the shots in Canada. It's just not the constitutional structure we have.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I only have a few seconds left, so I will try to be brief.

Given that calling in the military is such an expensive endeavour, would it not be appropriate to provide recurring and predictable funding to municipalities and provinces, for example, which are often the first to respond to situations on the ground?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: That is an interesting idea.

[*English*]

I'm not an expert on the flow of social transfers to the provinces for these aspects. I'm not aware that there is a significant or a targeted emergency management fund or transfer to the provinces and territories every year. I assume that Finance Canada or others might be able to comment on that.

As I said, we do have programs where we help them both during and in the recovery mode in terms of funding the expenditures, but in terms of upfront deployment of funding so they can build capacity, I'm not sure.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes.

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

I'm hoping to get a little clarification. We're talking a lot about the idea of inventory. Certainly, other members of this committee have touched on it, and you've been talking about it. There are the inventories that Mr. Fadden talked about on Tuesday and also doing an across-the-board inventory of capabilities.

There was also—and you could clarify this a bit—an emergency management strategy interim action plan, and there was a conversation about an inventory of governance. That hasn't happened yet, as far as I'm aware. Could you talk about how that compares? Also, if that plan is in place to do that inventory of governance, what's the timeline on that?

I think that's it for now.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Sure. The emergency management strategy does exist. That's a Public Safety-led strategy, and it works with the FPTs and ministers of the FPTs in terms of principles and the commitments we've made in Canada to advance the cause of preparedness and response—and mitigation, frankly. That means upfront investments in things such as infrastructure, etc., as many people have commented, no doubt.

What Mr. Fadden is talking about is what we would call.... It's a little farther down in detail in terms of a core Canadian capabilities list. A "capability" can be anything from procurement to coordination, like what I do. It could be the CAF. It can be planning. There are literally hundreds of capabilities that can be brought to bear. Firefighting, obviously, is a strength in Canada. On any given event, I think there are different levels of strategies there, if that helps clarify. There is an action plan under that emergency management strategy in Canada, which the provinces have committed to. I believe there are five or six priorities.

I don't know that there's a major governance review as part of that. I'm not sure what that might be alluding to, but certainly, internal to government, there is, federally, an EM—emergency management—transformation agenda, which Minister Blair is obviously

supporting and leading. That's at the federal level. It has implications and engagement, obviously, with the provinces as well, due to the shared responsibilities that we continue to allude to.

There are a number of levels of strategies and work to do, I think, some of which are well ahead, and some of which are still mainly a concept. I hope that helps.

• (1130)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: To go back to the humanitarian assistance workforce group you touched on, it has been together for two years and a bit. Is that correct?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: That's correct.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Could you go into a bit more detail on it? Specifically, what has been learned in those last two years about how that goes forward? Ultimately, that's what this committee is talking a lot about: Is that the way forward? You said that this is a support to take the burden off of Canadian Armed Forces, as an example. However, my concern, of course, is that it's placed onto a voluntary sector, and then about what that means to Canadians.

Could you give me more information on that? What's been learned over those last couple of years with this force in place?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: As I said, the humanitarian workforce program was essentially time-limited funding that was used to scale up the capacity of the Canadian Red Cross and other NGOs in Canada in order to respond to COVID initially, but clearly people have learned the lesson that this is an important capability to leverage and to support those NGOs to help in times of crisis, which the federal government has taken seriously. As I said, they have extended that funding.

In May of 2020, the government announced a commitment of \$100 million to help the CRC and others meet increased demand due to COVID. An additional \$70 million was added to that in December of 2020. Building on that, I think the fall economic statement in 2020 or 2021 offered another \$150 million over two years to support these NGOs. That includes the CRC, of course, being national in reach, but also St. John Ambulance, the Salvation Army and the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada, known by its acronym of SARVAC.

About 100 million dollars' worth of projects have been done and approved under that program in the midst of the COVID response, which is also handled by Public Safety and me and my colleagues here.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Ultimately, one of my concerns, and what I'm trying to understand through this, is.... Let's take search and rescue as an example. There have been key issues in terms of resources, whether it's inventory or what have you, given to public servants within the roles of search and rescue, as in that specific example. By turning to a voluntary sector, it seems as though this may be downloading onto a non-governmental group and a way for the government to shift that responsibility.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Yes, I think that's an interesting question. The SARVAC group, for instance, is federally funded and they are located in the provinces. There is that partnership aspect to it. It's not really about downloading, in my view. There is a partnership in these shared accountabilities.

With the NGOs, the Red Cross funding and the humanitarian workforce funding was about not only response costs to a crisis of the moment, or whatever wave of COVID we were in, but also to build capacity, to create more capacity and to make sure that the NGOs were strengthened in terms of their ability to support. That was a net gain. That was not a zero-sum game where we downloaded it from the CAF to them. So—

• (1135)

The Chair: Mr. Trehearne, I apologize in advance, and behind, for continually cutting you off.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I'll have to make my answers shorter, Mr. Chair. I'm sorry about that.

The Chair: My colleagues will make my life miserable if I don't stay within the timelines.

We're in our second round. I think we can get through it at five minutes a pop. We will see whether we can do it.

Mr. Perkins, welcome to the committee. You have five minutes, please.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to join the committee.

My questions, if you will indulge me, are obviously current, live and local, as I'm sure our colleague Mr. Fisher would probably want to deal with, around hurricane Fiona.

Can you let the committee know exactly what the preparations were by the federal government in the lead-up to hurricane Fiona to prepare for the emergency response, since we knew probably for about two weeks the likelihood that this particular hurricane would make landfall in Nova Scotia and go through Atlantic Canada?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I'm happy to. I think there are colleagues in Environment Canada and the Canadian hurricane centre who obviously might want to comment on that as well.

I'll take a step back. Hurricanes are considered a cyclical risk every year in Canada. Every year in Canada the best scientific minds provincially and federally do a hurricane risk assessment. My group coordinates that piece of work with them, and we roll that up and it is presented and shared with ministers—the Minister of Emergency Preparedness in this case—in terms of the risk assessment. That's also shared with all provincial and federal colleagues in terms of the emergency management world. There is an annual risk assessment and that involves people like Environment Canada, the Cana-

dian hurricane centre and the provinces as well in terms of their risk. That's up front and that happens every year.

What we do in my group is go out and meet with every one of the provinces—primarily the Atlantic provinces in terms of hurricanes—that are at risk and we discuss that risk assessment with them. We validate what they believe, whether it's true or false, and what their preparations are. Actually my group met with them individually long before hurricane Fiona hit, in June and July, when these hurricane risk assessments were published, and we talked to them about their preparedness for these things. Nova Scotia at the time was quite confident in its ability to respond as it tends to be one of the harder hit provinces obviously when we do get these hurricanes. The last big one was three years ago—hurricane Dorian—as you may recall.

Mr. Rick Perkins: I'll interrupt, because I have limited time.

When did your office get calls—and from whom—for assistance on hurricane Fiona?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I'd have to check the exact dates, but obviously it was essentially the day it hit or the day after. I would have to go back and check the exact dates. I was away actually that week, but I can provide that to the committee if you like.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Thank you.

Did that include specific requests for numbers of people from the Canadian Armed Forces to help?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: There were requests for supports of all kinds. We kind of vet those calls with the province and the emergency management folks. We talk about what the need is, what the gap is, what the province has or doesn't have and whether it is overwhelmed, and then where we can fill the gaps. In this case obviously the armed forces are deployed. In this case, as we all know, they are doing debris cleanup, they're cutting wood, etc.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Following hurricane Dorian, within a week there were 700 troops on the ground in Nova Scotia. This time there were only 200. The province, as the premier said this week, had asked for 1,000 and I think 500 have been provided or maybe a little over that now. Can you explain to me why, when a request comes in from a premier saying they need 1,000, the federal government does not supply the required numbers that the provincial emergency preparedness office is requesting?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: We work with the provinces to supply what they feel they need on the ground, and we work at the officials' level on that. For Dorian, I can't remember the exact number of CAF troops. I'm not sure if it was 700. I'd have to go back and check. They were there for a very short period of time, a few days. In the case of Fiona, they've already been there longer. My understanding from the CAF is that there are upwards of 600 folks, possibly more. We can provide those numbers to the committee if you like.

• (1140)

Mr. Rick Perkins: When the premier comes out publicly and says he asked for 1,000 and he's not getting 1,000, then there's a problem in the system.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Requests for assistance are sometimes dynamic things, and there can be a lot of back-and-forth in terms of what the need is on the ground.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Is your office getting those required or requested troops now to Nova Scotia?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Those troops are deployed right now, and we are actually having meetings with our colleagues in Nova Scotia again today to assess what more they may need, where exactly and what capabilities they need deployed to help further. We're actually having that conversation around three o'clock this afternoon.

The Chair: Mr. Fisher, you have five minutes. Go ahead, please.

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

Thank you, Deryck, for correcting Mr. Perkins' incorrect numbers there.

We talked a little bit about the process when a province or a territory needs federal assistance. We talked a little bit about the number of requests. I just want to talk about the types of support that Ps and Ts can access through an RFA during major disasters like hurricane Fiona and others, of which, unfortunately, there are more each year. The Government of Canada, through the disaster financial assistance arrangements, pays the lion's share of support in recovery through the provinces and territories. I think it's somewhere near 90% of the total that the federal government picks up.

With respect to requests for federal assistance and CAF assistance, what are the types of supports that provinces and territories can access?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: In terms of CAF assistance or more broadly...?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Additional federal assistance.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: If you look at what's going on with Fiona for instance, you see that you have the CAF. You have the Coast Guard. You'll sometimes have Environment Canada. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans will be helping. Obviously, you'll have Natural Resources Canada in terms of impacts on farming and agriculture and other things. There are a number of federal capabilities that are deployable in any given emergency.

Obviously, I've already spoken about the things on the public health side for COVID, which are significant, and then, of course, additional federal supports of a very significant nature for first nations in terms of emergency management, funding and response.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you.

Mr. May touched on the Red Cross in one of his questions earlier. Can you explain what support...?

Also, thank you for that long list of supports that the federal government provides. Maybe you can touch on some of the things that the Red Cross provides.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: The Red Cross is, obviously, excellent at supporting Canadians and folks who have been impacted, organizing everything from coordinating a local municipal response, name checks and checking people in to finding accommodations, respite, food and clothing—what we call real-life supports. It ranges a whole continuum, as I said, all the way to mass clinical care. The Red Cross has mobile health units and mobile hospitals, and then it also has nurses and doctors that can be deployed as well. It has a whole continuum, nationally, of skill sets and capacities that can be deployed to help.

The CAF also has a huge range of capabilities it can deploy, one of the best being planning and coordination in support of a municipality. Often, in the case of Fiona and other examples, we'll send a planning group in, which you might think isn't a big deal, but when you're a municipality facing something you're unused to, having additional planning and coordinating folks who understand that business and are able to target a response is a huge boon to them.

There is also, as I think my colleagues at National Defence have talked about, the critical mass of boots on the ground for major events when really just mass is required for cleanup, as we're seeing in Atlantic Canada right now. There's just a range of federal supports available, and that's distinct from all the funding programs you just referenced as well. There's a huge number of these, and there's literally an ADM coordinating committee of all the federal programming supports for Atlantic Canada under way right now.

Mr. Darren Fisher: That's very helpful. Thank you.

Notwithstanding the requests that came during the COVID period, we know that climate change is leading to more and more severe weather events, from Fiona in Atlantic Canada to floods and fires out west. What are becoming the most common requests for federal assistance?

• (1145)

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: That's a good question.

COVID was very interesting, but, as you said, it was kind of unique. Let's hope it's fading. There were a lot of supports for medical personnel, vaccination, etc., in that one. In terms of climate change, obviously that's fires and floods, and that's about evacuation and airlift. The CAF has finite resources when it comes to airlift. Given international events over the last couple of years, that's also more constrained.

For instance, we helped evacuate an entire first nation, the Mathias Colomb, in Manitoba from a fire risk this summer. That was 2,000-odd folks. Between the first nation's emergency management folks, the provinces and us, there was a major evacuation there. Those are the kinds of things we're seeing.

Last year in northern Ontario and B.C., the fires were extensive. There were massive efforts in Ontario to airlift first nations out of isolated communities that do not have road access into places in northern Ontario and the GTA as well. Again, that's airlift, coordination, real-life supports and medical and health—

The Chair: It's me cutting you off once again. I apologize.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, go ahead. You have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

As we heard earlier, the Premier of Nova Scotia requested additional troops, up to 1,000. At the same time, we've also heard from a number of experts who told the committee that the military is being called in far too often and there is too much reliance on the CAF.

Have you heard this criticism before? If so, how long have you been hearing this?

What is your opinion on that? Is there too much reliance on the CAF in responding to these crises?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: That's another great question.

As I said earlier, this was really amplified during COVID.

[*English*]

In the past, people have evolved.... The provinces have become stronger in many ways of responding, thereby needing less federal help, but at the same time, as my numbers and data point out, we have had an extreme number of requests for federal assistance and deployments of the armed forces and rangers to help.

That's a good and a bad thing, in the sense that provinces have become more aware of the supports they can ask for and more literate in terms of the EM system in Canada. They're building their own capacity, but they also know when and how to ask for help. Certainly, COVID has made that very clear to people.

Then, of course, the public also knows that the armed forces can be deployed. During successive waves of COVID, social media would light up with calls for the deployment of the armed forces, even if they weren't necessarily needed based on the facts on the ground or discussions with the province or territory. Many times, there's pressure in the system to deploy the CAF and for provinces to seek help, so that's an interesting dynamic.

It's not really for me, as a public servant, to judge whether it's too much or too little, but certainly, in the last couple of years.... We are all hoping that it somehow goes back to "normal" and that we're back in the world of five or 10 a year, but I don't know that's going to be the case, given the trends we're all looking at, the finite Canadian capacity and people's awareness of how and when to help and how to ask for help.

I hope that helps.

The Chair: Madame Normandin, you can't get in a second question with four seconds left.

You have two and a half minutes, Ms. Mathysen.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you. I'll try to do this in two and a half minutes as well.

We're just reading that General Wayne Eyre this morning ordered "an immediate halt to all non-essential activities in favour of boosting military recruitment and retention".

This, I think, speaks exactly to why we're here today and what we're talking about. How would that order impact where you go from here on your RFA stance?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: That order he issued this morning...?

• (1150)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Yes.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I would need to understand exactly what that order implies or what is directed. I'm not up to speed on what that announcement is. I'll have to revert back to my colleagues at CAF, but I think it's clear—and General Eyre has made it clear—that, internationally, events in the last couple of years, COVID, recruitment challenges and other issues are constraining their capacity.

We'll have to work with our partners to understand the impacts, as we do, and that evolved through various waves of COVID where, again, we looked to other capacities, such as the humanitarian workforce, to supplement the need without drawing on the CAF further. We'll continue that dynamic. As I said, we have an outstanding partnership, a sort of familial bond with the CAF. We work very closely with the strategic joint staff and General Eyre's staff in assessing what the art of the possible is. We'll continue to do that.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Can you elaborate quickly on how this is different for the CAF versus the Canadian Rangers? The CAF was deployed from base. The Canadian Rangers are not as structured as that. Can you talk about how you deal with RFAs in that regard?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I'll try to make this quick.

The RFA process is very similar for the rangers and the regular force.

The beauty of the rangers, obviously—and they have played a huge role in support of first nations—is that many of these folks are in the communities they serve. They are trusted. They are culturally aware. They are readily at hand, and they can perform a number of tasks in support of the community. The RFA process is very similar, although it's slightly lighter, obviously, and a little quicker in terms of the administration of it when we know there's a need in a certain community—and many first nations communities had outbreaks, obviously—where we can ignite the rangers to help.

They also have a job to do, though, in the service of the Canadian Armed Forces, so we also look to the Red Cross and others to supplement them.

The Chair: Again, we're going to have to leave it there.

Mr. Allison, you have five minutes.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our guests for being here.

I want to go back to a response you had to Mr. Fisher in talking about airlift capacities—one thing that is asked for the most. When Mr. Fadden talked to us, and obviously when we're looking at CAF, it's very expensive. You talked about contracts as well, and the fact that sometimes to get them out, it's a long process. In other words, it's not like you can turn them around as quickly as you'd like to.

Is there a possible way that you could have a memorandum of understanding or have people on retainer? I guess that's a term for lawyers. You could have some capacity, because you talk about these cyclical events and that seems to be things that happen over and over again like forest fires, flooding, etc. Talk to us. You're maybe already doing some of that stuff.

However, when we look at that critical airlift, I think Mr. Fadden would say delivery through the CAF is more expensive than potentially looking at outside. Give me your thoughts on how that all fits together.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I'll try.

Again, with CAF being a force of last resort, we try not to...but in a life-and-limb situation, as I cited in Mathias Colomb or others, like Bearskin Lake in Ontario, the CAF will respond very quickly and they have assets they can do that with.

In terms of their firefighting capacity, the provinces also have huge links and MOUs with various airlines, I think, for commercial capacity, so we also look to that. Again, that can be reimbursed by federal dollars.

As I said, we have often worked with PSPC. We don't have standing offers, because this gets back to the nature of emergencies in Canada, where locally and provincially, they may have those assets. For instance, the Ministry of Natural Resources in Ontario has a huge number of those kinds of assets, either that they physically own and run or that are at their disposal during the fire season.

The first choice is to get into the commercial assets before we get to the CAF, and that can often be part of the dynamic in that realm. There is quite a bit of commercial capacity available in Canada. As I said, in Ontario last year, my friends in Indigenous Services Canada, us and the province spent millions of dollars on commercial airlines and evacuating people.

Mr. Dean Allison: That's great, and that leads to my second question.

You talked about cyclical events that are occurring more often, so my question is around preparation by the federal government in terms of critical infrastructure, whatever that may be. We talked about airlift capacity, which is one thing, but as you see floods or fires and these kinds of events reoccurring, is there something that the government is doing to try to build the critical infrastructure, so it's less of a drain or we're more ready or more active?

You talked about the fact that provinces are building that capacity. I'm just wondering how the feds fit in with that.

● (1155)

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Absolutely, I think the short answer is yes.

Infrastructure Canada has billions of dollars at its disposal, and there are programs specifically for adaptation and emergency preparedness as well. That's upfront mitigation on the need for help, whether it's dikes or reinforcing dams or roadways.

You're absolutely right. There are very significant provincial and federal investments in those areas, which I'm sure my colleagues at Infrastructure or others could speak to. The need to respond is much different if you have prepared up front.

We have certain first nations where there have been infrastructure investments that have negated the need to evacuate folks in some cases. Those are the things that we all need to be focusing on. However, that's up front and it's long term.

Mr. Dean Allison: Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Allison.

Ms. Lambropoulos, you have the final five minutes, please.

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

Thank you for being with us here today to answer some of our questions.

Something you mentioned earlier to one of my colleagues struck me a little bit.

In the past, before 2020, you were saying that between five and 10 requests for federal assistance were made every year, and since 2020, it's been over 200. The drive for that has been because of social media. The public may be getting loud about requiring federal assistance. Of course, rightfully so, you're hoping that the number goes down and that this movement on social media comes to a slowdown.

What is it that you think is making people feel this level of panic and that the local and provincial levels are not necessarily able to deal with these crises? What is it that's making them feel that the capacity isn't enough? How can Public Safety work with provinces and the local levels to make sure that people don't feel this strain? What's changed exactly in the last couple of years?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: Yes, it's a very interesting question.

I mean, I'm not a psychologist, but I would say, as just a quick point of clarification, that the 200 RFAs are not just driven by social media. COVID was exceptional. Having said that, we know that the trends are bad in some areas, and COVID was exceptional. The numbers will reflect that.

We don't really know yet what "normal" will look like once we get past COVID. However, I would say that some of those things are exacerbated by social media, concerns in the media and concerns in the public. I'm not an expert in that field. There are significant communications strategies that Public Safety has, and the provinces have to try to communicate emergency management literacy and awareness to Canadians. There's significant programming. Those are always helpful. Public Safety does a lot of that. I'm sure my colleagues in communications would be happy to come and talk about it.

I think people know that there's a place where they can put up their hands and voice their opinions as well, and they take that opportunity, but I also think people understand and have learned lessons over the last few years about how this all works and who can help. I think there's a little bit of all of that in there, but let's face it: There were significant events under way as well.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Definitely.

You also mentioned that currently the biggest worry you have at Public Safety is the increase in hurricanes, especially after hurricane Fiona, which was unprecedented. You said there is currently an emergency management strategy in place to advance preparedness and mitigation. Amongst the list of things that would need to be done is the list of capabilities we currently have so that we know what's missing. What else would you say is at the top of that list of what's needed in order to prepare? What steps should be taken in order to help lessen the impacts of future disasters?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: That's a great question.

Hurricanes are only one of my worries. They are certainly a concern. The prediction was that this year was going to be more active than normal, and here we are. Floods and fires are equally affected by climate change. I think, as a country, we need to have a conversation about our overall readiness and our overall capacity to respond to these types of things. We've seen some very unique events in the last couple of years—very unique—and I think we've all felt, in every province and territory, some challenges.

I think overall capacity across the board—up front and in the middle of a response, and capabilities across Canada federally, provincially and municipally—we need to have a conversation about that. The trends are telling us that. As I've said many times, my small view here is that we've been lucky historically. Floods and fires, we get, but on these other rodents of unusual size or strange events that defy categorization—an atmospheric river or the derecho that hit Ottawa—if you don't know they are coming the way they are coming, you can only respond.

Across the board, we need to talk about our preparedness, our analysis and our capacity to respond as a country, and federally as well.

• (1200)

The Chair: I think that's a good place to leave it, Ms. Lambropoulos.

Hopefully, these hearings are a contribution to that conversation. I particularly appreciate it.

Before I let you go, my rough math tells me that with 157 calls for CAF assistance in the last two and half years, that works out to something like every five or six days you're on the phone to CAF saying that you need them for this or that. Is that within the realm of possibility?

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I've used actually similar language myself, Mr. Chair. At one point, I think we were doing an RFA of some kind every other day or every three days for two years.

The Chair: Wow. Okay. I appreciate that.

Again, I thank you for your contribution to this conversation. It's been very helpful. Hopefully, we'll get one of your bosses in here fairly shortly.

Mr. Deryck Trehearne: I'm happy to help. Thank you.

The Chair: We'll suspend for a couple of minutes while the clerk does whatever the clerk does.

• (1200)

(Pause)

• (1205)

The Chair: I want to call this meeting back to order.

There is always a danger in suspending because then everybody goes off and does whatever everybody else does.

Let me welcome to the committee, joining us in person—shocking event that it is—Ms. Eva Cohen, president of Civil Protection Youth Canada, and virtually, Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) David Redman, former head of Alberta Emergency Management Agency.

Welcome to you both. You both have five minutes to make presentations.

Ms. Cohen, you have five minutes, please.

Ms. Eva Cohen (President, Civil Protection Youth Canada, As an Individual): I'm Eva Cohen. Before I moved to Canada back in 2003, I was a volunteer in Germany's Federal Agency for Technical Relief, the THW, a government organization that consists of 98% unpaid citizen volunteers and is located all across Germany at the local and regional level.

I have experienced first-hand the many benefits of a community-based civil protection approach that is grounded in citizen volunteers. For over 14 years, I have focused on highlighting the value that a Canadian version, modelled on the success of the THW, would bring to our society and how it could be done.

To start the process of changing the culture of preparedness and building capacity, I founded a non-profit social enterprise called Civil Protection Youth Canada.

There is no question that government needs to have a backup force to ensure adequate response to threats beyond everyday emergencies. We need to understand our risks, which capabilities are required to be prepared, and a structure to ensure readiness and rapid deployment of the needed capacity.

Even though our military is our only government tool to deploy in a disaster, it is not the armed forces' focus, and they are not adequately trained and equipped for all-hazards tasks. Using sophisticated military equipment for disaster response and recovery is expensive and not our best option. Instead of armoured vehicles, we need excavators, cranes, high-capacity pumps and other equipment—and the people trained to use them—to clear debris, provide emergency power and water, and repair damaged infrastructure.

Luckily, most of the required skills exist in our population and in the private sector. What is missing is the structure that enables government the same rapid response, boots on the ground and scalability as the armed forces but with a civil protection approach. The easiest solution often seems to be the one that builds on what we have. This is the rare occasion where the fastest and most affordable solution is to add something entirely new to what is missing and to provide the framework that mobilizes a completely untapped resource: Canadian citizen volunteers. We need an organization that would complement and integrate, not duplicate or take away from what we already have.

Even though we have seen an alarming increase in disasters over the years, none of our current stakeholders in disaster response have been able to address the need for our system to adapt with a robust and sustainable long-term vision, and now we don't have the luxury of time. However, we are not alone in this situation.

I recommend that, instead of conducting lengthy inquiries and studies, we join forces with our international partners, Germany and the EU, and compare risks and capabilities. I ask the committee to please recommend to government that it make use of the standing offer of one of our closest allies, Germany, which, as a federation like Canada with jurisdiction of EM with states and municipalities, a vibrant NGO sector like ours and the military as the asset of last resort, has another tool for the government to rely on.

Seventy years of success and capacity building done in co-operation internationally is our shortcut, as we need to act now. The guiding principle is that government enables volunteers to be the backbone of the system and provides the long-term vision, structure and framework to ensure that this local, yet national, volunteer capacity is trained, certified, equipped and consistently integrated into the emergency response system.

This does not only guarantee efficient co-operation of all available assets; it shifts our completely reactive system to citizen-based proactive preparedness, readiness and resilience. A Canadian civil protection agency would provide the government with the operational arm that it is now missing.

Without adding an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy, it guarantees the focus, structure and standards needed for a national approach that connects all provinces, territories and indigenous communities, and enables them to provide their communities proactively with the capacity that is needed locally and regionally for rapid

and prolonged response, all at a fraction of the cost of our current approach.

• (1210)

The Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate it. You stayed within the five-minute timeline.

Colonel Redman, go ahead for five minutes, please.

Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) David Redman (Former Head of Emergency Management Alberta, As an Individual): Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me.

I would like to open my testimony by describing my two hats here today—first, as a retired soldier who served our country in peace, war and peacekeeping operations for 27 years; and second, as a retired emergency manager who served in operations locally, municipally, provincially, federally and internationally for 13 years.

First, I will offer, as was said in ancient times, that every country has an army—its own or somebody else's.

Let me start as a soldier. The role of the Canadian Armed Forces is, in my opinion, to protect the sovereignty of Canada, meet our commitments to the defence of North America, meet our commitments to NATO, support international security, carry out peacekeeping operations in support of the UN, and perform other tasks as assigned by the Government of Canada. These commitments mean we must have armed forces that are designed and trained to fight alone and with our allies on land, at sea and in the air.

A side benefit of a force like this is that it can provide aid to civil authorities and the civil power. Again, this is a benefit and not a primary or even a secondary goal of the Canadian Forces.

That said, the soldiers I commanded in my career were extremely proud to serve their fellow citizens in times of emergency, such as during the Red River floods in 1997 and the ice storm power outage in 1998.

Let me make three points. First, these actions take away from their primary role. Second, these actions drain time, resources and funding from their primary role—a role that has been extremely underfunded for decades. Third, these actions could normally be met far better by other agencies if we had resources committed to emergency management—which is a discipline that exists—in our country.

Here is a statement made by Paul Cellucci, the American ambassador to Canada after September 11, 2001, when I was personally briefing him in Alberta on critical infrastructure protection. He said, “Security trumps trade.” If we are seen as a parasite rather than as a partner to our allies in defence, then there will be immediate and long-term consequences.

With that, let me switch hats to being an emergency manager.

Nationally, Canada has a system called emergency management. You probably have not heard a lot about it—especially in this pandemic—because it has been ignored and, in some cases, silenced.

Emergency management has four functions: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. I think we will talk about these four functions frequently today.

Emergency management has an all-hazards approach. There are natural hazards, including biological, geological and meteorological. There are also human-induced hazards, both non-intentional and intentional. We need to discuss this all-hazards approach more today since resources from one hazard can be used for other hazards. The process for each of those four functions is identical.

Emergency management works across all groupings in our country, from citizens to first responders, municipal government, provincial government, federal government and international agencies. I hope we discuss the roles of these organizations in detail today.

What about the private sector? Eighty-five per cent of critical infrastructure in Canada is owned, operated and assured to a great extent by the private sector.

Clearly all orders of government have a role to play in ensuring the operation of our critical infrastructure to ensure the safety and security of our citizens. The private sector plays an essential role in emergency management when linked to emergency management properly. The same is true for non-governmental organizations like the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, the Mennonite Disaster Service, ham radio operator clubs and many others, both paid and volunteer.

Let me sum up. Emergency management has long been neglected by our country. In fact, in 2008, the standing senate committee on emergency preparedness wrote a scathing, detailed report about it. If anything, Canada has gone backwards. Just ask the members of SOREM, the senior officials responsible for emergency management from all 13 of our provinces and territories.

I put it to you that is why today you are meeting to discuss—I believe, incorrectly—using the armed forces of Canada to do emergency management. The Canadian Armed Forces do have a role in emergencies but as the force of last resort.

• (1215)

Members of the committee, I stand ready to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you.

This is shocking. I don't know what to do. Both witnesses stayed within their time limits.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: My goodness. We'll see whether the members can be as disciplined.

Madam Gallant, you have six minutes, please.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Through you, Mr. Chairman, my colleague Mr. Perkins, who got the numbers he quoted earlier straight from the premier, says that for hurricane Dorian, Nova Scotia got 700 troops within a week for just that province alone. In Fiona, they got just 300 for all of the Atlantic provinces.

Why do you think that is?

The Chair: Who is your question for?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It's for Colonel Redman.

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: I believe it's because.... In emergency management agencies, we have an EMO in every single province in our country. They work directly with their municipalities. As I'm sure you've heard before, when we see an emergency coming, there's an operational planning process, and the problem with something like a hurricane is that many of the volunteers you're going to use may have been directly impacted. We need to ensure that we have mutual aid agreements with our neighbouring provinces and territories—and we do—where those other provinces that aren't directly impacted can send volunteer groups or specific assets from one province to another.

During COVID, unfortunately, we developed a silo approach, where everybody was on their own and didn't ask anyone else for help, but I think emergency management has been structured—and continues to be structured—on mutual aid. Rather than constantly counting on the military, we should develop mutual aid agreements, which we have, with our other jurisdictions.

As well, I do believe, as I said before, that members of the Canadian Armed Forces are immediately deployable but should be removed as quickly as possible, and we should re-establish the organizations that exist within the province or territory.

• (1220)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Should Canada have a type of civilian corps of engineers?

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: In my opinion, no. I believe that if we do mitigation properly at the provincial-territorial level across our country and fund mitigation properly—the first of the four functions—those types of activities belong within the purview of the provinces.

They work directly with the municipalities, and I want to make it clear that each province defines “municipality” in a different way. As a member of SOREM and in my briefings to the Council of the Federation in years gone by, we approached it differently for have provinces and have-not provinces. There is a role for the federal government to assist the provinces that aren't as strong or don't have the same resources. In my opinion, that's the role of the provinces and territories with assistance from the federal government.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: In your previous role, would you know if at this point in time Canada has an actual plan in place, a playbook, if you will, to coordinate an immediate response when a national disaster occurs, be it belligerent aggression or natural disaster?

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: Absolutely. Public Safety Canada is responsible for that plan, and every province and territory in our country has a generic emergency management plan and then specific plans for specific hazards.

Remember how I talked about how we follow an all-hazards approach? There are subject matter agencies in each of our provinces and territories that look at the hazards for their specific province, such as a catastrophic earthquake in British Columbia and tornadoes in Alberta but not so much in other areas. Also, each province looks at fires, floods, tornadoes and terrorism across the all-hazards approach and tailors their capabilities to their particular province.

In Alberta, we required all 314 municipalities to also have an emergency plan that's tailored to the hazards in their municipality. The same is true in many provinces in Canada. With that, you then mitigate for that hazard list.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: In your experience, when you were at the provincial level, were there exercises together with the feds—regular tabletop or actual physical in-person exercises—to coordinate the efforts of both province and feds?

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: Provincially, we held them routinely, annually, and it was very difficult at times to get OCIPPEP, now Public Safety Canada, to participate in a meaningful way in those exercises. We always had a provincial representative in our POECs, both from DND and from Public Safety Canada, but for Public Safety Canada, after they closed the training school and after they stopped doing the regular annual exercise format to try to link elected officials into those exercises, we saw that completely collapse nationally.

I believe we need to reinstate that type of activity but recognize that it is still occurring at the provincial and municipal levels.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

In your estimation, based on what you saw happening in Alberta, was there sufficient coordination, a plan, to deal with the pandemic, or were we just flying by the seats of our pants federally?

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: Ma'am, I could spend six hours with you on what happened in the pandemic. I wrote a position paper on it, “Canada's Deadly Response to COVID-19”. I believe emergency management principles were thrown out the window. Every province and territory in Canada had a written pandemic plan. The federal government had a written pandemic plan. None of them were utilized.

The Chair: Thank you.

Madam O'Connell, you have six minutes, please.

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

Mr. Redman, I'm going to start with you.

You mentioned that, in your opinion, having troops on the ground in the natural disasters we're seeing should be done as quickly as possible, and pulling them out as quickly as possible. We heard from the last witness, if we're comparing numbers from Dorion to Fiona, that there may have been more boots on the ground, but they were there for less time.

With that in mind, are CAF troops on the ground the only measure of response and resources? If it's emergency planning, it's truly about filling gaps. Is a political model of only tracking the number of Canadian Armed Forces' boots on the ground really telling the whole picture of resources or where the best resources are being utilized?

• (1225)

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: That's a very expansive question. Every performance indicator that's built has flaws.

However, let's start with the fact that there's a daily relationship between a province and the federal government when it comes to the use of the Canadian Armed Forces. The liaison officer sat right beside me in my operations centre in Alberta, and I would only call them when I needed them, and only for specifically why I needed them. In most cases, I never called them at all because I would always use the resources of the province first.

You have to understand that, when you're in a flood, you're probably not having a wildfire. The province has fire attack teams and many resources. I could take those and use them to build sandbags and dikes. I could use the private sector.

If the measure of success of the federal government to the provinces is how many armed forces' members are on the ground, we have the performance indicator wrong, because the federal government brings far more than just the armed forces of Canada. They can help the emergency management organization access provincial boundary types of resources from neighbouring provinces, if they're past the mutual aid agreement of the province next-door. They can bring someone from Quebec to help.

Remember, we have mutual aid agreements in many areas. To use wildfire, for example, there are wildfire attack teams in every province in Canada. There's a central coordinating agency that moves those fire attack teams across our country, without any involvement, until it gets past their capabilities. Ontario will send Alberta their fire attack teams, and Alberta will send them back to Ontario, when each of those provinces experiences that hazard at a different level.

Those types of coordinations exist in the silos, but are linked across all the silos of all the different hazards and all the government agencies.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Thank you very much for that comprehensive answer.

Ms. Cohen, I don't want to leave you out.

I'm curious. My colleague Ms. Mathysen asked a question earlier this week to a witness about the idea of using the private sector.

Do you have experience in building in protections to ensure that the private sector is ready and available? You can do planning and prepare for natural disasters, but you don't always know exactly how they'll land or when they're going to start. How do you prepare so that they can handle it with relatively short notice? Two, how do you ensure that, in the time of crisis, there isn't gouging and there are protections in terms of costs?

We've heard lots of testimony about the benefits of the private sector. I have no issue with that. In a time of crisis you can go there, but is it cost-effective for taxpayers and can it get the job done? Do you have any experience or anything you want to add maybe to that line of questioning?

Ms. Eva Cohen: I appreciate the question very much, because it speaks to what I always try to explain and what we should understand: a whole-of-society approach. At the moment, everybody thinks everybody should do something. It refers to a system in which each sector needs to enable the other sector to play a role.

When we talk about the private sector, it doesn't necessarily mean using its business capacity. It means the role the private sector has in terms of enabling volunteers to be ready and available when needed. It entails co-operation between the government and the private sector with respect to having those volunteers ready. It also speaks to who the private sector is: the people who live in the communities. We forget that.

A crucial point of why the civil protection model in Germany works so well is that the government has an ability to tap into the expertise of the private sector on a voluntary basis. Naturally, people are invited to bring their expertise to the all-hazards picture as unpaid experts. Everybody else—those just looking for an exciting hobby—can decide to train in that capability and become an expert, because the government offers the training needed, provides the equipment needed and ensures certifications are in line with the chamber of commerce, so that, as a volunteer, you also have a return of investment and can use your training with this government organization in your private life. There needs to be incentives for all sides.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before I call on Ms. Normandin, colleagues, I want to use the last five minutes to deal with the subcommittee report. We're going to have five fewer minutes than you might have thought.

With that, we have Ms. Normandin for six minutes.

● (1230)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you to both of our witnesses.

I would like to hear what you both have to say in response to my first question. You both talked about the importance of preparedness and mitigation.

Lieutenant-Colonel Redman, you talked about the role of the provinces and how that could be supported by the federal government.

For your part, Ms. Cohen, you talked about a civil protection model.

In light of the current climate crisis, the federal government will have to pay for everything upfront, either by sending funds that were not necessarily planned or through the armed forces, which is an extremely expensive endeavour.

I wonder if you could comment on the importance of predictable and recurring funding, for example to the provinces or to NPOs.

Would recurring, predictable and possibly increased funding be a key factor in successful preparedness and mitigation?

Ms. Cohen, perhaps you could go first.

[*English*]

Ms. Eva Cohen: Yes, I think that's absolutely needed, especially as it speaks to what we understand “capacity” to be. In my view, that is exactly why we call in the armed forces, because they are a reliable tool for the government.

If we define “capacity” as hired short-term contracts, for example, like those often used in the pandemic—and health system as well—how do we guarantee that capacity is available next time? Is it just because they have a name on a list? That's not the same thing. When we think about capacity, we should think about what is readily available. That comes at a cost. That is, in my view, why we don't have it at the local level. Even though the local level is the jurisdiction dealing with emergencies first, there is nothing it can afford beyond emergencies, which are the events that stress the system to the point where other help is needed. Even though we have emergency management capability across the provinces.... I like to describe emergency managers as general contractors. They're not the ones actually clearing the debris, fixing the infrastructure or providing power. They are the ones managing the incident, and they need tools to do that efficiently.

I would like the committee to explore what capacity exists at the provincial level that could be used in a local emergency. I'd like to talk about the disaster or catastrophe, because, if we confuse the scale, it adds to some of these things being so unclear.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Lieutenant-Colonel Redman, I'd like to hear your answer to the same question.

[*English*]

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: Absolutely. Let me first of all comment on Ms. Cohen's concept. It is a concept that I know. As a soldier, I did three tours in Germany during the Cold War, and I counted on the civil defence organization of Germany to make sure that my troops could get from their barracks to the border when we were deployed. I worked with them extensively in other areas as well.

Let's talk about the actual.... You're talking about funding, but I want to give you a structure. In Alberta, first of all you have first responders. Every citizen is expected to be able to take care of themselves for 72 hours. The first responders come to the aid of the citizens who are directly affected. Then the municipal order of government must have a municipal emergency plan, which is verified annually and includes a lot of volunteer organizations that exist in their community and MOUs with their bordering communities. Then there's the provincial order of government that does exactly the same thing and has those volunteer organizations embedded, things like ham radio operators.

At each order of government, there's a responsibility, and it is assumed that they are accountable for the funding. However, what we expected of a town of 100 and what we expected of a city of one million were completely different with respect to their emergency management plans, and we monitored their plans based on that level of capability, with the province filling in the gaps. I expect the same with the federal order of government: that it would work with all 13 provinces and territories, understanding their capabilities and limitations, linking in volunteer organizations, linking in the other agencies and providing funding and assistance where they are needed.

Edmonton didn't need any funding. A small town like Hanna might. You work based on a requirement, and that's from knowing your jurisdiction at each order of government.

I'm sorry. If I may, could I just add one piece?

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Please, go ahead.

[*English*]

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: The largest piece of funding that's missing in our country is for mitigation. Preparedness, response and recovery have been built. Certainly there are some shortfalls, but the largest piece that's missing is mitigation, which is either moving the target from the hazard or the hazard from the target. We could talk about that for hours.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

This brings me to my second question. I don't know whether you'll have time to finish. We can come back to it in the second round, if need be.

There has been very little discussion about adapting to climate change. Consider the hurricane that hit Fort Myers, Florida, for example. If cities have to be rebuilt year after year where they stand, disasters will cost millions of dollars.

Are we investing enough in adaptation, from a climate change perspective?

[*English*]

The Chair: Answer very briefly, please.

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: Mitigation is a huge part of emergency management. There are four functions. It is the first, so mitigation is an actual science. There is a discipline and a process to it, and it is the most neglected. If you have a huge flood on a river and then you rebuild in exactly the same flood plain, you're not doing mitigation.

The whole concept of mitigation is a shortfall that needs to be addressed nationally.

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

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

Ms. Cohen, you talked about the capacity of the public or individuals in relation to the private sector and, ultimately, the investment in people on the ground, their skills, their education, their reaction to these things and how that can actually benefit an employer in that relationship.

Could you expand in terms of that model coming out of Germany? Ultimately, people will want to serve their country and serve their communities. That's an incentive on its own, but it cannot be the only incentive. I'll just give a brief example. In my riding, there's a gentleman, a constituent, who wanted to provide service in terms of one of the NGOs. He was unemployed at the time. He could not get EI to cover that leave because EI stipulates in Canada that you have to constantly be looking for work and you have to verify that. That's part of that system. However, he couldn't afford to go without that kind of compensation.

Could you explain how Germany handles that in terms of the model?

Ms. Eva Cohen: That is a very good question. I think it points to a big problem that we currently have in making the best use of our volunteers and our volunteer organization.

Germany has a system in place through which the federal government basically guarantees that you do not have any negative effects as a volunteer for this organization. It also guarantees something called the wage reimbursement program. That means that, if you are in a full-time job and your expertise is needed to respond in your region, your employer may ask the federal government for somebody to replace you and for the government to pay for that person.

In reality, that is very rarely used, as you can imagine, because the private sector makes use of their corporate social responsibility that way and they're proud to have their employees helping. Usually, because these disasters are local, the region is probably impacted anyway, which impacts the private sector, so there is no issue with that.

If I may, I would also like to link it to the mitigation piece, because we try to see this in silos. However, I also think mitigation always happens in the response, and we don't have that capability to prevent the response from escalating if we don't have the civil protection capabilities in place locally.

Another point is that I totally agree that we need as much mitigation as we can have, but then all of those mitigation projects are not a guarantee that they're not going to fail. If we build dams or dikes, we need people who will service them and who can defend or protect them if something happens. All those things link together, but the availability of staff or volunteers is what is crucial and what is missing at the moment.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: The world is experiencing this, but certainly in Canada, we have a labour shortage. If you're speaking about a company that is already experiencing that difficulty in terms of staffing.... The Canadian Armed Forces are experiencing that as well.

How does Germany deal with that, in terms of the labour shortage, to find that balance whereby they're ensuring that their employees can go and volunteer as part of that system when there is an emergency?

• (1240)

Ms. Eva Cohen: It's a tricky question, because I think the benefit in the German model lies in the standard that they have across the country. As an example, the catastrophic flooding that they had last year, which was the biggest deployment of this organization in its history, saw all 700 stations involved in the deployment.

One benefit is the surge capacity that the system provides, because if everyone is trained the same way, to the same standards and with the same equipment, depending on the module—as we discussed earlier—and what is needed in which region, all these people can then be rotated so that nobody has to leave for a long period of time.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: In terms of the training that you spoke of, I asked you in the past if.... Because it's standardized training, you said that the government provides it and then it feeds back into their ability to feed back into their communities and the value of an employee overall.

In the German model, how is that training provided to standardize it? Is it provided through the armed forces? Is it provided in a different format? Could you explain that?

Ms. Eva Cohen: That's a very good question. I think one of the aspects that we keep ignoring is the cost of all this. There's the cost of involving the private sector, for example, or the cost of using the armed forces. This is another aspect. Most of the training is delivered by unpaid volunteers at the local level.

The “train the trainer” aspect is what the federal government provides the material for, and it makes sure the standards are there, but the training happens depending on the needs of the community and how they want to organize themselves. It's whenever it suits them. It may be after hours, on the weekend, once a month or every week. It's totally up to the community or the regional offices.

What also gives quality control is the fact that there are regional exercises happening all the time. These are not just tabletop exercises. People get together, not only in this organization but in cooperation with first responders and other NGOs. They have real-life scenario exercises. I can only speak for myself as a USAR volunteer. The exercises felt so real, I wasn't even aware sometimes that we weren't rescuing people in the rubble. It was so exciting. It was so well done—

The Chair: Unfortunately, we're going to have to leave the response there. Thank you.

Colleagues, we have 15 minutes. If I set aside five for the subcommittee report, that means we have 10 minutes for 25 minutes' worth of questions. That math doesn't work, even for me, so we will have two minutes, and then two, one, one, two and two. That will use up our time.

Mr. Motz, I'm counting on you to get it done in two minutes.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Redman, it's a pleasure to have you here.

I want to continue on with my colleague Ms. Gallant's question. We're studying CAF's domestic deployment implications. We know they deployed during COVID mostly to long-term care facilities. Can you please expand upon the government's massive failure in the COVID response and pandemic, please? At the end of it, can I ask you to submit your position paper to the committee for reference?

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: To answer your second question first, definitely. It's available at the Frontier Centre for Public Policy. It's been published since July 1, 2021.

I'm sorry. I'll have to ask you what the first question was again.

Mr. Glen Motz: We had a pandemic response developed for an influenza-type event through SARS and H1N1, and the government failed to follow that completely. It was a massive failure in all of society. Can you explain what should have been done differently?

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: The pandemic is an all-of-government response. We went from the mission statement, which is to protect the province from the SARS-CoV-2 virus, to protect the medical system. We needed to build a governance organization that covered all of the impacts of SARS-CoV-2 on the public. We needed to keep our businesses open and we needed to keep our schools open, because, by doing that, we are using what are called “non-pharmaceutical” interventions. There are 15 of them. Almost all of them should not have been used in this pandemic.

This pandemic should have had a targeted response to those who were most vulnerable—people over 60 with severe multiple comorbidities. Canada ranked last in protection of our seniors: 73% of the deaths in this pandemic happened in long-term care homes, and over 93% happened with our seniors. We didn't protect our seniors who were in the public or in our long-term care homes. We should never have closed schools. The impact on our children will last them their entire lives. What we've done is unconscionable.

However, I will leave it to that paper, which I will submit to the committee.

• (1245)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Motz.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robillard, go ahead for two minutes.

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Lieutenant-Colonel Redman, would there be less need for the Canadian Armed Forces to be deployed to assist civilian authorities if capacity building efforts in emergency management were conducted at the local level?

[*English*]

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: The simple answer is absolutely yes. I would put it to you that, when you look at provinces that have a very strong EMO—I'll give you British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario as the prime examples—you see the Canadian Armed Forces used far less and called far less. Working in the operations centre, they can say what their special capabilities are, and normally we meet them by other means.

If we do mitigation, it has to be done on a national level, not on a provincial level. If you build a dike to stop the water from overflowing into your community, what you've done is you've packaged the water and sent it to the next community. You can't build mitigation for flooding one community at a time. It has to be a whole process. That applies to every hazard.

But, yes, you would see the Canadian Armed Forces required less if we did emergency management in our country, as the Senate standing committee in 2008 reported.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you, sir.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Robillard.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, go ahead.

Ms. Christine Normandin: To add to that question, what would motivate provinces that are less prepared to increase their preparedness?

[*English*]

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: First of all, I believe every province and territory is motivated. They simply have fewer resources. When you look at somewhere like Nunavut and compare it to Alberta, you can see the automatic difference. It's something like the Yukon to Alberta. That's where you need to ensure that there's mutual aid between bordering organizations.

That's where the role of the federal government comes in, to make sure there's an even capability in provinces that don't have the ability to do it themselves. I don't mean by using the Department of National Defence. I mean by building their emergency management operations capability and coordinating across moving public or not-for-profit agencies as required during an emergency.

The Chair: You have one minute, Ms. Mathysen

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Ms. Cohen, is the German THW run by a third-party NGO-led organization, or is it run by the government, like a Crown corporation?

Ms. Eva Cohen: It is a government organization and a federal agency. Everybody expects a big building with bureaucracy in that, but in reality, it lives at the regional level, which makes it so unique. It's really the people who are the organization. Only 2% are paid staff, and the majority of that staff are at the regional level.

What I would love the committee to do is ask Germany, at all three levels of government, why it thinks this is a win-win situation.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: The Canadian model is seemingly moving toward that third-party NGO-led.... What are the dangers of that? Please be superquick.

Ms. Eva Cohen: It's very dangerous, because you lose control of the money. That's the quickest answer I can give.

The Chair: Mr. Motz, you have two minutes.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Redman, I want to go back to the conversation we were having in the last round. We're going to have another pandemic-like event. We've had them over the years and decades. If you were to make recommendations to government on a domestic response to a pandemic and the use of resources, what would you suggest the priorities need to be?

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: First of all, we need to hold a national inquiry that is not run by government. It has to be independent. We have to really look at what other places did, like Sweden. That's exactly what our plan said we were going to do.

The lessons learned process is a real process. It calls for discipline, and there are experts in how to conduct it. They should be part of that committee. You don't base lessons learned on beliefs. You base them on evidence. They're not learned, if you then don't write a plan to say exactly how you're incorporating them.

• (1250)

Mr. Glen Motz: In the 30 seconds I have left, can you tell me what—

The Chair: You don't have 30 seconds left, but because I'm a nice guy, you're going to get 30 seconds.

Mr. Glen Motz: Thank you, John.

Why do you think the government didn't follow the plans that it had set up previously for exactly this event?

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: I'm afraid you'll have to ask the government. I have given many presentations. I have worked with governments across this country. I have written to every premier in this country 12 times. I gave up on them and wrote my position paper.

I know there are many doctors who are extremely upset, because I've worked with them and briefed them. They have been silenced through censorship.

The Chair: The final two minutes go to Mr. May.

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

My questions will be to Ms. Cohen. I'm very intrigued by the volunteer-driven programs you're talking about in Germany. Does Germany still have mandatory military service?

No, it does not. When did that change?

Ms. Eva Cohen: It was a couple of years back.

Mr. Bryan May: Is there still mandatory volunteer service? I remember that, if individuals didn't want to be in the military, they could volunteer. That was around for a long time, was it not?

Ms. Eva Cohen: Yes, that was actually the main recruitment tool for a long time for the civil protection approach.

In the meantime, Germany has realized that it's actually the youth component that has the biggest potential. This is also why I started the youth program, because we have to think about why it is that Germany trains 500,000 youth starting at the age of six to be responders, and how this reflects on people's attitudes about the need for preparedness. We don't do any of this in Canada and just expect adults to do the right thing.

Mr. Bryan May: Yes, that's sort of what I'm getting at. I have friends and family who have spent a lot of time in Germany, and they talk about this sort of culture of volunteerism that is ingrained in society there.

I'm wondering if that's the gap we're seeing here. Taking that step and making it mandatory for a high school graduate to put two years toward some sort of volunteer service is a pretty extreme step. Are we going to need to do something like that to create or foster that kind of culture?

Ms. Eva Cohen: That's a great question, because mandatory volunteerism is the death of volunteerism. It's much better to appeal to a bigger sense of purpose and being able to have a role.

If you think of the fact that government does not have a choice and as citizens we also don't have a choice as to what happens with taxpayers' money in that respect, asking reactively for donations and solidarity—and there's always room for that—and then matching that with taxpayers' money again is not the best way we can do this.

In Germany you pay around \$10, let's say, a year. As a taxpayer I have the choice to be part of that response and have a role, and I like to say, "To stand on guard for Canada". That taxpayers' money is invested proactively to create the system that enables everybody, from youth to veteran to senior, to be part of the answer to the problem.

That is a choice that currently does not exist, so government needs to enable volunteerism. I don't think it's a question of culture. It's that our government doesn't make it possible. People don't have the ability to volunteer in the capacity that needs to be rapidly available.

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

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank both of you for your presence and thoughts—clear and articulate thoughts, may I say. I think it will be interesting to hear what the reflections of committee members are in a short while.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I have a point of order, Mr. Chairman.

In panel one, there was a comment where the first witness said he would have to look into a question, and I just want to ensure for my colleague who asked the question that there is a definite follow-up with the witness so that we can obtain the information he didn't have at his fingertips.

• (1255)

The Chair: Okay, I think that's a fair comment.

Colleagues, your subcommittee has met. It has produced a report.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Release the witnesses.

The Chair: I thought they were released, but I got interrupted by a point of order.

Unless you really want to sit in on this—I'm assuming you don't—I'll ask you to remove yourselves.

LCol (Ret'd) David Redman: Thank you for having us.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now you've changed my train of thought here. We met. We had a subcommittee report. The report has been circulated. May I have someone to move the report?

I have Mr. May, seconded by Madam Normandin.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Did you put a motion forth to...?

The Chair: The subcommittee report is on the table for debate.

Is there debate?

Madam Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chairman, I looked through the report, and I did not see any reference to my reading the motion into the record and having actually formally put forth the motion with respect to the affordability aspect on soldiers. We have a cost-of-living crisis that's affecting the Canadian Armed Forces, and we had a motion to have a study that, but it wasn't mentioned at all in the third report. We didn't agree to do it yet, but it wasn't even mentioned in there.

The Chair: Well, it's still an outstanding motion.

Mr. May.

Mr. Bryan May: Yes, thank you.

I think you're right. I don't think it was...but it was not discussed during the subcommittee report.

The Chair: Are there any other comments?

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next is witnesses for October 18.

Glen.

Mr. Glen Motz: I'm sorry. It's not related to committee business, but it's regarding your staff.

Do you guys know the talent of Mr. Shawn over there? I was at an event the other night, and his playing of the cello was absolutely incredible. If we ever have a Christmas event, that guy needs to play. He is amazing.

I just want to acknowledge that at this committee.

An hon. member: I'll second that as well.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: He actually writes his own stuff. He has a real life outside of working for me. You can imagine that he has to have a real life. He truly is an amazing guy.

Okay. Thank you for that acknowledgement of Shawn's considerable talent.

For the Arctic study that we just agreed to, we need witnesses. October 18, I think, is the date. We've received witnesses from the NDP and the Bloc, I believe. I need witnesses from the Liberals and the Conservatives.

What's that?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Do we need to give all of them?

The Chair: Right now you do. The 18th is the deadline.

A voice: No, the study starts on the 18th.

The Chair: I'm sorry. You're right. The deadline is October 5.

Having said that, for the purposes of the main committee, we've been authorized for travel for Washington and Colorado. The anticipated time for travel will be the November break week. I appreci-

ate that's going to cause some difficulties for some. If you could alert the clerk to difficulties ahead of time, we can make adjustments accordingly.

We are also open to suggestions you may have as to what we should be doing in Washington and Colorado, people you think we should see. Take note that there will be no senators and no congresspeople when we're there. That's silly season U.S.A.

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Chair, I'm curious to know what the numbers are. Is it going to be the whole of committee? Is it going to be six people total?

• (1300)

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Wilson): It will be seven members, plus staff.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: During the subcommittee, we talked about—it was recommended, I think, by me—potentially going right after the House rises in December in order to give us more time to plan.

Remembrance Day week is a big week in our ridings. This makes it more difficult, so I'm hoping that's still on the table. It also makes it cheaper, potentially, in terms of budget and what we can do, because we'd have more time to plan for hotels and so on.

The Chair: It creates other conflicts, though.

The Clerk: In response to Ms. Mathysen's point, it's up to the committee to determine when you'd like to go. The only thing specified in the House authorization motion was that it be during an adjournment period.

The Chair: Go ahead, Bryan.

Mr. Bryan May: I was going to respond to that, as well.

It creates other conflicts, but I think we talked about that in the subcommittee. As long as we can schedule it on the November break week at the very beginning and be back for our November 11 commitments.... Do we know how long this trip will take, roughly?

The Clerk: The budget request was for a trip of five to seven days.

Mr. Bryan May: If we left right away, on the Saturday after we rise, we could theoretically be back for the 11th.

The Chair: Is there any other commentary? We know when we have to have witnesses in, folks. You know what we're going to do on the 18th.

My proposal is to leave this as an evergreen study. I don't think we're anywhere close to having recommendations on aid to civil authority.

I should share with you that I've had a conversation with Minister Blair. He is recovering from a knee operation. He would be delighted to appear and indicates that the government is doing a lot of forward thinking about this issue. I know he would like to come and talk about that thinking.

Go ahead, Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Are you referring to the aid to civil authority study being an open one? We would like to see a report, so we can get a response from the government.

The Chair: I know, but we have nothing to say, right now.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Don't we?

The Chair: Nothing other than the army being used too much. That's our chief conclusion, right now.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Are you still looking for more witnesses, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I'm open to more witnesses. If you think we've arrived at the end of our study, we should indicate that. If we have, I don't know what it is.

Mr. Darren Fisher: It would be a small report.

The Chair: A small report with nothing to say is kind of a useless report.

Let's close it off, because I'm going to get the end sign from folks.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We have recommendations we want to put in. What other sorts of things do you want to have in the report, so we can get an idea of the types of witnesses we should be asking to flesh it out more?

The Chair: We started to go down that road with Eva Cohen. There are alternate models to think about. Right now, we have two alternate models, if you will: the Red Cross model, for want of a better term, and a more organized, coherent and society-wide approach to volunteerism. Both of these would mitigate the excessive use of the military.

I think those need to be chased down a bit more, at least with Minister Blair and possibly others. My thought is to leave this study open. There's no compelling reason why we need to get to the report right now. Who knows what's around the corner? What next disaster around the corner will strain our abilities and so on? Hence, I am thinking of leaving things open.

It's not as if we don't have places to go. The Arctic study will start as soon as we get back.

Is there anything else?

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the Copyright Act. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the Copyright Act.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: <https://www.ourcommons.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre des communes.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la Loi sur le droit d'auteur.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante :
<https://www.noscommunes.ca>