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• (1530)

[English]

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

I see quorum. It's 3:30 p.m. We have Minister Blair with us, and I'm sure that he will introduce the folks who are with him.

Minister Blair, you have five minutes for your opening statement, sir.

Thank you.

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Once again, thank you to the committee for the opportunity to discuss our supplementary estimates (B) for the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces and the Communications Security Establishment.

In the interest of time, Mr. Chair, I won't introduce all of the officials who are joining me here today. I understand that this committee will have an opportunity to spend some time with them after I have completed my appearance, but if I may, I'd like to point out that I'm joined today by General Allen, vice-chief of the defence staff; Deputy Minister Bill Mathews; and, of course, Chief Caroline Xavier from CSE. To the other officials, I apologize. I will introduce them as they come forward.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, you are as determined as I am to ensure that our people have what they need to do the difficult and demanding jobs that we ask of them, and today I come before you requesting an additional \$1.5 billion to fund our defence priorities.

We are seeking \$15.2 million for the Communications Security Establishment, most of which will be directed towards ongoing operations of the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. These funds will bolster CSE's ability to act against malicious cyber-actors working to take advantage of Canadians, and this will also bring CSE's 2023-24 budgetary authorities to just over \$1 billion for the first time in the agency's history.

For the Department of National Defence, the supplementary estimates include mostly routine or anticipated requirements, and as such, I will endeavour to limit myself to a brief overview of some of these items and how they support us in defending our nation and supporting our people.

To begin with, I'll reiterate that our number one priority will always be the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces in the Department of National Defence, and this is reflected in these estimates, with over a third of the ask going towards compensation and benefits for military members. This is in line with increases that were negotiated earlier this year through collective bargaining for public servants.

We are also accessing reprofiled funds totalling \$151.4 million for the Heyder Beattie and LGBT purge class action settlement agreements. These funds will compensate members who have been affected by sexual misconduct and discrimination and hopefully provide closure and promote healing for those members.

I will not belabour the importance of fair compensation for our people in uniform or of creating a modern and inclusive work environment where all members of the defence team feel protected, supported and respected. I believe that's well appreciated by the members of this committee. It was very clear when I was with you before, two weeks ago, that you understood the difficulties that are faced by CAF in terms of recruitment and retention, and I believe that you are all in agreement that we must do everything in our power to ensure that the CAF remains a viable and attractive career option for existing and prospective members, and because in an evolving threat environment, we need a robust, ready and resilient workforce that can meet the complex and rapidly evolving challenges that we're facing, these efforts become extremely important.

At our last appearance, we had the opportunity to speak about the dramatic increase in domestic deployments and the high demand for CAF support in responding to natural disasters. We also need to strengthen Arctic security and to modernize NORAD, not to mention the many obligations to our allies and partners as we seek to advance peace and stability around the world and to defend the rules-based international order that is being continually challenged.

The additional funds we are requesting will help us to meet these demands, whether it's the \$550 million to support Ukraine through military aid in Operation Unifier, the \$119 million we're requesting to expand our NATO contribution program and establish the North American regional office for DIANA, which is NATO's new defence innovation accelerator for the North Atlantic program located in Halifax, or the \$30 million in transfers to other organizations to help with defence-related issues and priorities.

As one of the largest departments, the Department of National Defence is 100% committed to responsible stewardship of public funds while delivering the best results possible for Canadians. I hope you will see these estimates as evidence of that commitment.

I want to thank you, and I'm now happy to take any questions you may have.

• (1535)

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

With that, we'll start our six-minute round with Mr. Bezan.

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

Thank you, Minister and officials, for being here.

It has been eight years, and we have seen \$10 billion in money that was supposed to be spent on our Canadian Armed Forces lapse, and we didn't get the equipment we needed on time.

We know you're cutting a billion dollars from the budget right now. When we look at where you projected your SSE spending to be, it's \$25 billion under where it's supposed to be by this point in time. This year alone, you're underspending SSE by \$6 billion. That really talks to the underinvestment in our Canadian Armed Forces.

We all just saw the video from Admiral Topshee, in which he talked about the condition of our navy. It's going to be another 15 years just to replace our frigates. We have these new AOPS, but we can only take out one at a time because we don't have enough sailors to man them. Something has to give.

Minister, can you tell us if we are pulling out of the Indo-Pacific with our frigates if we don't have enough manpower? Are we no longer going to participate in the Maritime Task Force under NATO?

Hon. Bill Blair: First of all, let me speak to, if I may, Admiral Topshee's video, which I think was frank and a very important explanation of where the Royal Canadian Navy finds itself currently.

We have already committed significant resources to replenishing our fleet. The Halifax-class frigates are coming to the end of their lives, and we have undertaken contracts to replace the Arctic patrol ships and the surface combatant ships, but it's going to take time for them to be delivered.

Admiral Topshee expressed his concern about the need to continue to maintain the Halifax-class ships and to ensure that we have the personnel we need to staff them as they undertake the important missions to which they are assigned.

Mr. James Bezan: We know the condition of the navy and we should be getting ships built quicker. We're going to be waiting 15 years to replace the Halifax-class frigates.

RUSI, the Royal United Services Institute, came out with its report on the Royal Canadian Air Force fighter jets. They are saying that we're down to 56 pilots, and we cannot maintain that to operate a NORAD and NATO mission. One of your predecessors, Minister Sajjan, went out there and bought a bunch of used Australian fighter jets. We got 88 aircraft, supposedly, but we don't have the pilots to fly them.

Are we withdrawing from NATO and from doing any air policing?

Hon. Bill Blair: Absolutely not, and as you're well aware, we have entered into a contract for the delivery of 88 of the F-35s. Just last week, we also announced the procurement of up to 16 new P-8s for multi-mission aircraft.

In my conversations with General Kenny, he has been very clear that the acquisition of these new aircraft, both the multi-mission and the new fighter aircraft, really creates an opportunity for him to turn around the challenge they have faced in recruiting and training new pilots. It's an expensive proposition. We talked about the cost of training these pilots, but we remain committed to it.

We are acquiring the aircraft that the Royal Canadian Air Force needs, and those newly acquired aircraft will create new opportunities for us to meet our recruitment, training and retention goals.

No, we are not withdrawing from any missions. In fact, Mr. Bezan—

• (1540)

Mr. James Bezan: How come you didn't support our F-18s?

Hon. Bill Blair: —I believe sincerely these new acquisitions are going to enable us to fulfill our NATO commitments and to do the important missions that we are obliged to do.

Mr. James Bezan: We also know that we're not getting the F-35 fleet in full operation until 2032. We don't have the pilots for the CF-18s. We know that the training in Canada has been wound up. We're going to be relying on the United States to train our pilots, and they have a backlog of their own pilots, plus pilots from other allies to get through their own system. We aren't going to be able to address the pilot shortage quickly enough to deal with the threats.

The war is not going to wait for us if things continue to escalate on the global scene.

Hon. Bill Blair: I would always invite General Kenny to speak for himself, but he has assured me they continue to be able to be fully operational with our fleet of F-18s and they will continue to support that fleet until the delivery of the new F-35s.

It is not without its challenges. I think this committee in particular has canvassed the issue of recruitment and retention of the very best and the brightest that the Canadian Armed Forces needs. We're making investments in not only the air force and the platforms, but also in the training and the equipment, and the maintenance and the supply for the armed forces.

Mr. James Bezan: When we look at the supplementary estimates and when I look at the budget and an economic update from a couple of weeks ago, there appears to be \$1.5 billion less in it for Ukraine and for Operation Reassurance. Are we backing off with our support for Ukraine? It's definitely less money than what we have given them in military aid.

Hon. Bill Blair: That's an extraordinary question coming from you, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Well, I want to see more.

Hon. Bill Blair: What's that?

Mr. James Bezan: I want to see more, but we're actually seeing a reduction.

Hon. Bill Blair: You'll have every opportunity to continue to support more, because that is the work that we are doing.

Canada has so far committed \$2.4 billion of aid to Ukraine. We've been delivering on those commitments. Our most recent announcement was for 50 additional LAVs and armoured medical vehicles for Ukraine. We're working very closely with GDLS in London to ensure that the production of that is accelerated and that those vehicles will be delivered as quickly as possible to Ukraine.

There has been no abatement or easing of our commitment to Ukraine. We have been continuing to deliver. As a matter of fact, just about a week and a half ago I announced the delivery of nearly 11 million rounds of ammunition to Ukraine, also with assault weapons and other winter equipment that Ukraine said they needed from us. When they ask, we deliver.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. Fisher, you have six minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister Blair, Major-General and Deputy Minister for being here. To you and the rest of your team, thank you for being here again at committee.

Minister, Conservatives are known for calling Atlantic Canada a "culture of defeat", but let me tell you—I know you know this—and let me tell everybody in this committee that Atlantic Canada is a culture of innovation. For example, my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour is home to an established and growing defence research and development industry.

Minister, bringing NATO's defence innovation accelerator for the North Atlantic, which we know as DIANA, to our municipality will be of real benefit to its growth. I also know that these incredible researchers and innovators will be of real benefit to NATO as well. I see that the supplementary estimates include \$30.1 million over four years, starting in 2023-24, and \$10 million in ongoing funding for DIANA's establishment in our municipality.

I understand that the Conservatives are going to vote against this, which is a bit of a shock, but can you give us a better idea of the timeline for establishing DIANA? Could you also speak a little bit more about how this supports NATO's efforts as well?

Hon. Bill Blair: Yes. We have already committed the money, and it's in the estimates, but we're actually standing up the opera-

tion of DIANA even now. We've just recently concluded a competition that had applicants from all over the NATO countries to participate in new innovations and projects for DIANA. Seven Canadian companies have been successful in that process. We are moving ahead.

I think there's a great opportunity. There are DIANA offices in Estonia, I believe, and London, and now they'll be in Canada, located in Halifax.

This is not just a Canadian centre; this is going to be the centre for North America. It's a huge opportunity for us to not just connect innovators and industry to the Canadian military but to also create real opportunities for Canadian industry right across the NATO countries. It will have the effect of improving innovation and moving forward in NATO capabilities to respond to the threat that our adversaries represent.

• (1545)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much, Minister.

On the topic of the Conservatives voting against these supplementary estimates, that means the Conservatives are going to vote against support for NATO. They're going to vote, again, against supporting Ukraine, and they're going to be voting against, as I also see in the supplementary estimates, better wages for Canadian Armed Forces members.

We expect an awful lot from our CAF members. They're doing incredible and important work here at home and abroad. This committee agrees that they deserve to be well paid for the work they do. I can tell you that from what I've been hearing, it hasn't been enough. Wages haven't necessarily been keeping up.

That said, I'm glad to see wage increases for CAF members in the estimates. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about these increases—how they will be implemented, when they will be implemented and specifically how they will benefit some of the lower-paid ranks.

Hon. Bill Blair: I'm going to be careful here, Mr. Fisher, on the precise details of these contracts, because many people were impacted by the negotiated settlements through both the public service and CAF. My understanding is that this has resulted in wage increases between 8% and 10% for members of the Canadian Armed Forces, which is not insignificant.

There are other investments that we have to make, such as in health services, in housing services and in making child care available. All of those investments are also part of how we're attempting to support the reconstitution, but fair wages and fair compensation for the men and women who serve, both in our regular forces and the reserve, are really important. These were very much in line with the settlements that were negotiated through the public service and through Treasury Board for the broader public service, but it maintains a level of parity for members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Do I have much time left?

It's two minutes.

I wonder whether you could just talk a bit more about wages. Again, we have conversations at this committee on a regular basis, and all the members, especially the opposition, seem.... The Conservatives will often talk about how they feel we're not doing enough. I can't cross the t's and dot the i's when they talk about not doing enough, and then see them stand up and vote against the things we are trying to do for our Canadian Forces members.

It saddens me and it shocks me that someone would say one thing—that a party would say it supports our armed forces—and then vote against the things that you and your team are putting on the table today.

I just want to get your thoughts on that.

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Fisher, without commenting on how any particular partisan position may play out or how a political party may vote, I believe very strongly that we have to invest in the Canadian Armed Forces. That includes, particularly, investing in the men and women who serve, and fair wages. That compensation is important, but so are many of the other investments we are making as well.

Certainly the money that the Canadian government has determined is required is directly in response to the request we've received from Ukraine and our NATO allies. I'm hopeful. I'll just say that. I'm hopeful that this will receive the support of the House of Commons when we vote on these matters later today. I am hopeful that we'll be able to pass this legislation, because the funding for defence and for Ukraine that is in the supplementary estimates, I think, will be really important. It's important to the men and women who serve. It's important that we continue to invest in them and that we do it carefully.

I believe the vast majority of members of the House of Commons believe in support for Ukraine. I believe the vast majority of Canadians believe in supporting Ukraine.

Ukraine is, in many ways—

The Chair: You're going to have to leave Mr. Fisher's question—

Hon. Bill Blair: Apparently I have to leave this.

I'm sorry, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Yes, you do. Thank you, Minister Blair.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for six minutes.

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

Thank you for being with us today, Mr. Minister. It's always a pleasure to have you here.

I would like to come back to the issue of funding for member compensation and the \$583 million set out in the supplementary estimates. Despite wage increases, it must also be noted that cuts are being made in other places. For example, some allowances are be-

ing cut, such as the post living differential, and replacing that allowance will save about \$30 million.

Considering that, inflation and the rising cost of living, will \$583 million be enough to encourage members to stay in the Canadian Armed Forces? I'm thinking in particular of senior military officers, not just NCMs.

● (1550)

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair: Thank you very much for the question.

I believe the settlement that was negotiated was a fair one, and it reflected the inflationary pressures that CAF members were experiencing previously, but we were also mindful that affordability has become a significant issue. In the same way that we talk every day in the House of Commons about the affordability challenges Canadians are facing from coast to coast to coast, those same challenges are extended to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

One of the things we have tried to do... You mentioned, for example, that some of the funding has been shifted. We might talk about the housing supports that were available to all members. A decision was made to make those housing supports available to a broader range of people, but particularly for the lower incomes of the Canadian Armed Forces. Providing the same level of benefits to those who make very high salaries as to those who make very low salaries didn't seem to be an issue of fairness. The people who made less needed more help, so we made some changes to enable them to do that.

We also realized that the impact of that change could be pretty significant for somebody who suddenly lost a benefit, so there was work done—I think good work was done—to make sure that the introduction of those changes would be phased in over a three-year period. People at the higher wage levels are experiencing a change in their benefit, but it won't be immediately impactful because it's being phased in over a three-year period.

I believe this gives an opportunity. We're trying to be very careful with the money we have to ensure that it is used to the best benefit of those who need it the most.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

I know you weren't in your position when it was announced that the differential was going to be replaced. However, the Department of National Defence was criticized for not informing the forces of this new approach. It was perceived as a slap in the face.

I'd now like to talk about Department of National Defence funding. Since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea, most NATO member states have increased their budgets, and even more so since February 2022.

In that context, do you feel that the public would have supported you if the defence budget, and therefore members' wages, had been maintained, if not increased, rather than decreasing by \$900 million, as announced?

I get the impression that we're in a situation where military spending is increasing, but the government has failed to seize this opportunity.

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair: To be very clear, and as you're well aware, in 2017 the government introduced “Strong, Secure, Engaged”, which was a program that involved a number of significant acquisitions. It was an increase in defence spending over a period of several years, from 2017 through to the end of 2026. The plan in “Strong, Secure, Engaged” was to increase defence spending by approximately 70% over that period of time.

There was strong public support for that, because I believe very strongly that Canadians do value very much, first of all, the important role that the Canadian Armed Forces provides in maintaining the national defence and security of our country. I know how appreciative they have been when we've called on the Canadian Armed Forces to assist in response to emergencies, as we talked about last week when we met. I think they understand that Canada has international obligations to NATO, NORAD, and the Indo-Pacific. There's an expectation and there's strong Canadian support for the Canadian Armed Forces.

We've also recognized—and there has been lots of discussion here—that the increase in spending we put in place when we began the program in 2017 does not really match the new threat environments. The world has become an increasingly dangerous place. Since the pandemic, the increasing climate-related disasters, and most importantly the more adversarial and aggressive nature of Russia and China, we know we have to do more. I've attempted to acknowledge at committee previously that we must do more.

Canadians have every expectation that we'll be careful when we're spending their money. That's our job. I also believe very strongly that they also support continued investment in making sure that the Canadian Armed Forces have the tools they need to do the job.

• (1555)

The Chair: We'll allocate 39 seconds to your next round.

Next we have Madam Mathyssen for six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you to all for being here again today.

This week, we sadly saw the new numbers come from StatsCan on the military sexual trauma issue. You've repeatedly said you're committed to enacting Justice Arbour's recommendations. Certainly this involves her fifth recommendation, but we haven't seen the full measures that we need to see, and considering what came out of that StatsCan report, it's extremely worrying.

Those crimes are on the increase. Certainly the reporting is on the increase and not on the decrease. I would argue that many of the survivors of military sexual trauma are losing quite a lot of faith in the system and in the help they need to get, considering report after report. It's not getting better.

I brought forward a bill—and I've talked to you about this in committee before—to end the concurrent jurisdiction for criminal sexual offences, because ultimately those who have started in the

military justice system were shunted to civilian court. They were then told they weren't going to get their day in court. They're in this in-between period.

You have a bill before you now that I introduced. I would like to know if you will take that bill as soon as you possibly can, which is immediately, to ensure that those survivors receive the justice they deserve.

Hon. Bill Blair: Thanks very much.

First of all, if I may comment on the StatsCan report on sexual misconduct in the military, I agree with you: It's a deeply concerning report.

I think it's important to reflect on the time period in which the survey was taken, which was from October 2021 to 2022, but it doesn't in any way diminish the importance of the findings in that report. I think it is a stark reminder of the concern that the inappropriate behaviour still persists and that we have every responsibility to act and to act expeditiously. We have the 48 recommendations of Justice Arbour.

By the way, I would also echo the importance of your comments on the importance of meeting with survivors, advocates and organizations. I did that earlier today. I think that's important. I continue to listen broadly. Just as an example, I know that Canadian Armed Forces General Carignan has conducted interviews and consulted with almost 9,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces, because listening to those voices is really important.

I have been working very closely with our external monitor and with Justice Arbour with respect to the implementation of all the recommendations. I think the signature one is recommendation 5. We took immediate steps in response to the issue raised by Justice Arbour by ensuring that all future sexual assault investigations were being investigated by the civilian police and adjudicated through the civilian criminal justice system.

What is required is legislative reform. I want to assure you that I have a whole team of people who are working full out on that. They're working closely with Justice Arbour and survivor groups and consulting with the Canadian Armed Forces and with solicitors general and attorneys general in all of the provinces across the country.

We're working very hard. We will bring that work back. It's complex. I don't offer that as an excuse but rather an explanation. We're working through the important complexity. Justice Arbour has asked me to take the time to get this right but to keep moving, and we are moving very expeditiously on it.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Ultimately, though, what happened when those cases were moved in the middle to a civilian court system was that it ensured they didn't have the jurisdictional capacity to deal with them. Some of those cases were dismissed.

What this legislation would do immediately is help to correct that from ever happening again. You could do that right now. I too have an incredible team that went to work to ensure we had some legislation. You could adopt that right now.

• (1600)

Hon. Bill Blair: I've read your legislation. It's quite clear. It's about four lines. There's a lot more work that needs to be done to not just simply.... The legislation is going to be important. We are working on that. I'll have more to say about that in the future. At the same time, there's a great deal of other work that needs to be done in order to make sure that it gives effect.

I'll simply acknowledge—and we heard this very clearly from the external monitor, from Justice Arbour and, most importantly, from the victims—that on these types of offences, the change that is required is not merely an event. It's a process. It's very important in the process that we do all of the things that are necessary to give it its true effect, which is to protect those individuals and to make sure their cases are dealt with appropriately.

In addition, I think a big part of recommendation 5 is to make sure that we continue to provide the supports to the survivors of sexual assault so that it's not simply a matter of criminal investigation and proper adjudication of their complaints, but also to make sure the supports are in place to help them recover from these offences.

Listen, I've talked to you before about my very strong desire that we'll work together on this. I remain committed to that.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Survivors have been waiting a really long time, and it's been 18 months since Arbour, so please act faster.

Hon. Bill Blair: Yes, ma'am.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Kramp-Neuman, you have five minutes, please.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, your government has done a fantastic job of standing around, claiming that it is taking steps to address the unacceptable instances of sexual harassment in our armed forces.

In the past 12 months, sexual misconduct in our Canadian Armed Forces has doubled, and this government has failed. The political leaders of a self-described feminist government, including the Prime Minister and now three ministers of defence, should be ashamed themselves in their failure to stem the flow of institutionalized violence against our young men and women and by being passive, indifferent observers to its growth.

Over the past eight years, survivors and experts have been shouting from the rooftops. Justice Deschamps warned in 2015. Justice Fish warned in 2021. Justice Arbour warned in 2022. Your government's response was to cut a billion dollars and to establish a panel to review military colleges, a panel that your office delayed in creating because you couldn't find seven experts. You spoke to this yesterday.

The experts are the survivors—the young men and women on the receiving end of catcalls, the troops who found themselves in a darkened hallway with a drunk superior at the Christmas party, the women who were pinned up against the bulkhead of a ship and raped. The experts, Minister, are the men and women under your charge who are emotionally, mentally and physically violated.

As a mother myself, I would find it extremely difficult to justify approving of my children joining your Canadian Armed Forces, an organization that has no place for them to live, no sufficient money to pay them, no equipment for them to use, all overseen by a government with no respect for their autonomy.

Responsibility starts and stops with your political leadership. After eight years of inaction and gutting, you, as a new minister, have a lot of work to do.

On top of the billion-dollar cuts, Minister, why has your government, despite allegedly taking steps to address sexual misconduct, allowed instances of sexual harassment to double—double, Minister—in a single year in the CAF?

The Chair: Thank you.

That was two minutes and 30 seconds, so you have two minutes and 30 seconds to respond.

Hon. Bill Blair: Thank you very much.

Let me just back up a little bit. The report that was released by StatsCan yesterday actually involved surveys that were taken by 23,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces between October 2021 and October 2022. I accept completely the concerns that were raised.

I think this is important. The Canadian Armed Forces is one of the only institutions in the country—one of a few in the world—that are actually gathering this information and speaking to their own people. As I mentioned earlier, General Carignan has also consulted with 9,000 members of the force on the steps that are necessary.

I appreciate the partisan perspective on what has been done, but frankly, I have—

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Excuse me, Minister, if I may. The victims whom I'm speaking about, the survivors, must become victors.

What motivation do we have to retain current members and recruit future heroes if we're allowing this to happen?

• (1605)

The Chair: Please continue.

Hon. Bill Blair: Thank you.

I would offer a slightly different perspective, and it's not mine. It's the perspective of Madam Justice Arbour, whom I've spoken to a number of times on these matters, and, more importantly, of our external monitor, Madam Therrien, who has been given the important job of monitoring the progress. She's issued two very important reports. I'd invite members of this committee to familiarize themselves with those reports, because I do think they clearly articulate the hard work and progress that are being made.

We have now taken some very significant steps in response to those recommendations. Just yesterday, as the member indicated, we stood up a review panel for the military colleges, both for RMC in Kingston and for Saint-Jean.

The work and the expertise.... I would invite the members of this committee to take a good hard look at the people we've appointed there.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: If I may, Minister, just in the nature of time—

The Chair: I'm trying to be equal in time here. I'm going to have to let him respond.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: I believe I have five minutes, right?

The Chair: You're down to about 20 seconds.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: My last question is this: In your opening comments, Minister, you acknowledge that the priority for you is that the men and women in the CAF be respected and protected. Do you feel that's happening?

Hon. Bill Blair: Yes, ma'am, I do.

If I may, let me go back to say that I invite the members to familiarize themselves with the work that has been done, with the panel that has now been stood up. I think there's been a great deal of work done, and let me also acknowledge that there's much more work to do.

Mrs. Kramp-Neuman also asked about some of the investments that we're making in the Canadian Armed Forces. I would remind her and this committee that in 2012, Canada's expenditure on defence dropped to 1%, the lowest in our country's history. It only passed more—

The Chair: We'll have to leave that answer there—

Hon. Bill Blair: —in 2013, when it actually fell below 1%.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Bill Blair: We've been digging out of a very deep hole left to us since then.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Ms. Kramp-Neuman.

Mr. Collins, you have five minutes.

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

I want to take us back, Minister, to the Ukraine support that you referenced in your opening statement.

You talked about the half a billion dollars that's included in the budget and some additional supports. Of course, we know that our government has been investing in many areas. That includes support for 200,000 Ukrainians who were displaced by the illegal war in Ukraine and have made their way here to Canada. It includes the long list of sanctions that were included in the Special Economic Measures Act. Of course, there's the previous support that we've provided in budgets since the start of the war.

One thing that I've noticed domestically is the slippage in support for the Ukraine community and for the Ukrainian president, his government and his soldiers. The Leader of the Opposition has sent out a directive to his party to halt support for Ukraine. We noticed that recently with the Canada-Ukraine agreement that was referenced by my colleague—

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, that's a complete misrepresentation. We're not voting for a carbon tax. We still support Ukraine unequivocally, including giving them more weapons. As a matter of fact, if you look at the budget here, military aid going to Ukraine will decline over the next three years—

Mr. Chad Collins: Chair, the issue is they make comments. They can dish it out, but they can't take it when it comes back the other way.

The Chair: This is moving from a point of order to—

Mr. Chad Collins: That's the problem we have with the people on the other side of the table. So be it.

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): I have a point of order.

The Chair: This is not a point of order. This is a point of interruption.

Mr. Collins has the floor.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Misleading the committee—

The Chair: Do you have another point of order?

Mr. Pat Kelly: Yes.

The Chair: What's your other point of order?

Mr. Pat Kelly: The point of order is that this member has misled the committee.

The Chair: That's the same point of order. I've already ruled it to be a point of interruption.

Mr. Collins, you have the remaining....

Mr. Chad Collins: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I would like to get back to the support for Ukraine. Of course, we've done everything we can, and we're seeing slippage on the other side of the table in terms of a lack of support.

I'm wondering if you could reiterate the importance of the investment we're going to pass this evening in terms of the resources it will provide to Ukraine, its government, its people and its military.

Hon. Bill Blair: Yes. Thanks very much. I can take you through some of it.

For example, we're requesting \$49.85 million to reinforce Canadian support for Ukraine through Operation Unifier. For the last eight years, we've been able to train through Operation Unifier nearly 40,000 members of the Ukrainian armed forces. In my conversations with the defence minister from Ukraine, he has said that training really was key to their survival in the early weeks of the war and to their continued success in fighting back Russia's illegal invasion of their country.

We know that training has continued to be modified. It includes such things as sapper training, for example, to deal with mines in that area. Canada is contributing fairly significantly to the F-16 training that's going to be taking place in Poland. We've been working very closely on that.

In addition, the money we have earmarked in these supplementaries—approximately \$500 million for Ukraine—will enable us to provide them with the munitions they are asking for. There's a wide range of artillery munitions and other munitions. We'll continue to contribute financially to air defence systems for Ukraine. We are part of a number of important NATO coalitions, which are providing support through various initiatives to Ukraine.

I think, most importantly, we're listening to them. We're working with them. When they said, for example, "We're going into a winter campaign. We need winter uniforms. We need winter tents. We need warm winter clothing. We need ammunition from you," they were very explicit about what they required, and we responded to their request. We've been able to deliver it to them.

Another thing I would like to mention is that the Canadian Armed Forces also brought their aircraft to bear. They're working out of Prestwick. They have been able to transport tens of millions of pounds of material, not just from Canada but from our allies, to get it to Ukraine and get it to their front lines where they need it.

We're going to continue to support them in every way possible. That support is a result of listening to what they want. I'm having a conversation.

Also, one of the things we've heard very clearly is the need for ammunition. By the way, I'm hearing exactly the same thing for the need for ammunition for the Canadian Armed Forces just today. We have now ordered more than four times as much ammunition for next year as this year because we know the Canadian Armed Forces need it and we know the Ukrainians are going to need it, and we're going to make sure that we have it so that we can provide it.

• (1610)

Mr. Chad Collins: Thanks, Minister.

Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

The Chair: You have a minute.

Mr. Chad Collins: Perfect.

Minister, I'll turn my question to the international scene. We're seeing the election of very right-wing conservative governments across the world and some slippage internationally for the Ukrainian community and its war against Russia.

What are hearing from your contemporaries in terms of what's happening in the United States? We see the Republicans, much like

our Conservative colleagues across the table, playing political games with the Ukrainian support, particularly those who are supporting Trump. We're seeing the same across the table from those who are supporting the new leader of the official opposition.

What are your contemporaries saying on the international stage in terms of the importance of continuing the international support effort, not just here in Canada but internationally, for Ukraine, as well as some of the issues you just talked about?

Hon. Bill Blair: I'm a member of the—

The Chair: You have seven seconds to answer that question.

Hon. Bill Blair: I'm a member of the Ukraine contact group. I want to assure you that among all of our NATO allies, I know from my conversations with Secretary of Defense Austin that his support for Ukraine and the importance of supplying Ukraine to hold back that Russian aggression and the challenge to the rules-based order remain absolutely resolute. We are concerned with some of the other noise we're hearing, but among our allies, we're solid.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Collins.

Madame Normandin, you have slightly over three minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to come back to the establishment of the Canadian Military Colleges Review Board, which will review their role. If a decision is made about the role of military colleges, I hope it will be related to cultural change rather than financial considerations.

Has the department ever done any comparative studies on the costs associated with changing the role of military colleges? For example, we could decide to send officer cadets to civilian universities.

Have you ever assessed what the additional spending or savings would be?

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Blair: I anticipate that this review panel will make significant and important recommendations to us. This is in direct response to recommendations 28 and 29 in the Harbour report.

When she made those recommendations, she made the observation that closing those military colleges would be a lost opportunity. I agree with that, because there is much benefit that can come from them. However, she also clearly articulated that there needs to be a significant cultural change in those institutions, because some of the behaviours and experiences, particularly of women and minorities going through our military colleges, are unacceptable and need to change.

When we get the recommendations back, I don't want to speculate or deal with hypotheticals, but I am quite prepared. There is great value in the panel's work. The recommendations will be very important to us. If the recommendation is that we need to invest more in those colleges in order to effect a permanent and sustainable cultural change, I'll come looking for those resources.

• (1615)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: With all due respect, you didn't answer my question.

I wouldn't want changes at the military colleges to be based on financial considerations. I was wondering if you had assessed the costs associated with various role change scenarios for military colleges, including a scenario aimed squarely at their closure. Officer cadets would then be sent to civilian universities.

Has the financial impact of each scenario been assessed, yes or no?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair: The answer is no. That work has not yet been done. I don't have the results of the panel's work. When it comes back to us with recommendations, that assessment will take place.

The Chair: Thank you, Madame Normandin.

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

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Recently the CBC came out with a report on the training and weapons that Canadian Armed Forces was providing to war criminals in Iraq. Canadian soldiers tried to warn their superiors in Ottawa about what they were seeing. War criminals were showing them videos and bragging about gruesome torture, rape, and extrajudicial killings. Apparently an investigation was done, and you have been quoted as saying that you were supportive of it, yet it was not an independent investigation.

Certainly we should ideally learn from what had occurred with the Somalia affair and those cover-ups when there was a lack of transparency and a suppression of what soldiers were trying to tell superior officers.

Do you see the importance, in this case specifically, of putting forward an independent investigation so that when soldiers come forward with these sorts of protests over training war criminals, we can trust there would be a truly investigative process that is independent?

Hon. Bill Blair: That isn't quite a complete explanation of everything that transpired.

The actual event took place in 2018. It was investigated and dealt with at that time. The issue was then raised again by CBC, I believe, in 2021. At that time, the chief of the defence staff instructed the military police and the JAG to review everything that had taken place three years earlier.

That was when I was asked if I had confidence that this was done appropriately and thoroughly. I said yes, because the matter had been reviewed fairly extensively. In 2021, decisions were made and corrective action was taken to ensure that there was greater clarity on what everyone's responsibility was under the circumstances that

had apparently transpired in 2018. The determination was made at that time on what actions were appropriate, and they were taken.

The matter came forward again as a result of media reporting. I was asked if I believed the action taken in 2021 had been appropriate, and I do.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Ultimately, these soldiers, though, are experiencing a great deal of trauma. Clearly, this has not been resolved in their eyes. Do you not see that as a problem?

Hon. Bill Blair: I think that for any soldier who has experienced trauma, we have a responsibility to provide them with support. I believe that should be made available and is being made available to them.

Your question was not about the trauma that those individuals experienced, but rather about how the matter was dealt with.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Ultimately, having to live with the fact that they further trained and armed war criminals is part of their trauma and part of the investigation they're asking for.

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

Hon. Bill Blair: Again, the trauma should be dealt with appropriately. I agree 100% with that.

I was asked specifically about whether or not the actions taken in 2021, when this matter was brought forward, were appropriate. I have been briefed on that and I believe they were.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Mr. Kelly, go ahead for five minutes.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Thank you.

Minister, Admiral Topshee said we may fail to meet our force posture and operational commitments in 2024.

I'll ask you, as minister, this question: Will we fail to meet our force posture and operational commitments in 2024?

Hon. Bill Blair: I think Admiral Topshee was outlining concerns about our state of readiness—

Mr. Pat Kelly: He was quite specific.

Hon. Bill Blair: He said that we may. The next question that had to be asked—and I've asked it—is what we must then do in order to ensure we do not fail to meet our operational readiness commitments.

• (1620)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Will cutting a billion dollars from the defence budget help us meet our operational commitments?

Hon. Bill Blair: To be absolutely certain, we're not cutting anything from the operational readiness budgets of the Canadian Armed Forces. We're looking at things like professional services and consulting. That does not impact the delivery of those ships, the maintenance of the Halifax-class fleet or our recruitment and retention efforts.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Are there a billion dollars in corporate travel and consultants' fees that you're going to cut in the department?

Hon. Bill Blair: There are. We looked first at professional services.

By the way, not all professional services can be cut. It's over a billion dollars, and in fact many of those services are providing maintenance on our bases and health services, etc.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay, so there are a billion dollars in—

Hon. Bill Blair: Mr. Kelly, let me finish the sentence.

We're looking very carefully, first of all, at professional services, consulting fees and executive travel. By executive travel, to be clear, I'm talking about any travel that does not involve moving troops to mission or training opportunities and things like that. That's necessary, and we're not impacting that in any way.

There is other travel within the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence that we're looking at to see if we can find savings if we change the way we book that travel or if the number of people travelling or the manner in which they travel can be altered. We're looking for savings there.

We're also looking at a number of other important processes of administration in our procurement and in the way in which we administer our HR systems and payroll systems.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay, let's talk about procurement, then—

Hon. Bill Blair: There are opportunities for efficiencies. I would be surprised if you would be opposed to finding efficiencies in the way we spend the public's money.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Well, I'm concerned that after eight years, there are a billion dollars in consulting fees that are unnecessary and can be easily cut without affecting operational readiness.

Will the billion—

Hon. Bill Blair: They're not easily cut. Again, my responsibility is to make sure that for every dollar we spend, we're producing real value.

The Treasury Board was very explicit to us. I want to share this with you, sir. It's important. None of the reductions the Treasury Board is seeking can impact CAF operations. I've added my own caveat to that because I don't want it to impact the supports and the services that we provide to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. Pat Kelly: When he was here beside you two weeks ago, the chief of the defence staff would not affirm that this could be done without impacting operational readiness.

Hon. Bill Blair: He has every responsibility to express his concern, and we're working right alongside him and his team to make sure we do not impact their operational readiness.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Thank you.

Last week, you admitted to Global News that there is a serious production problem with ammunition. On September 28, General Eyre told this committee that there has been no increase in ammunition production, particularly of 155-millimetre shells, since the

invasion. The war in Ukraine has been going on since 2014, but the invasion was a year and a half ago now.

You just told this committee that you increased the ammunition order by four times. Where will this ammunition come from, if there is no increase in production?

Hon. Bill Blair: Let me perhaps add a bit of clarification for you.

Earlier this year, the Department of National Defence provided \$4.3 million to IMT Defence to ramp up their ability to produce M107 155-millimetre projectiles from 3,000 to 5,000 per month. There are also a number of other programs we're funding: General Dynamics Ordnance and Tactical Systems has almost \$2 million towards updating automation for production of the M795 projectiles and an initial \$2 million to demonstrate combustible cartridge case manufacturing capability for the 155s.

We are significantly investing in Canadian industry—

Mr. Pat Kelly: When will the deliveries begin?

Hon. Bill Blair: As I said today, we just placed an order for four times more ammunition next year than what we were able to receive this year.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Okay. That's an announcement. When will the delivery occur?

Hon. Bill Blair: Well, that is a question you may want to take some time with—

Mr. Pat Kelly: We have him after you're done.

You have another 25 seconds, so go ahead.

Hon. Bill Blair: It's been ordered for delivery next year. It will be delivered next year.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kelly.

Mr. Fillmore, you have the final five minutes.

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Minister, Lieutenant-General, Deputy Minister—

I think there's an open mic in the room somewhere.

It was great to see you at the Halifax International Security Forum last month, where, by the way, you announced funding to stand up DIANA. Thank you for that.

Those are the two things I want to talk about: the Halifax International Security Forum, or HISF, and DIANA.

Having attended HISF for nearly a decade now, I've been able to see first-hand the value it brings to the world's democracies in addressing and solving the challenges we all face together. Of course, there's a great benefit to Canada as the host nation and to Halifax as the host city.

At the same time, and complementary to that, is DIANA. As Mr. Fisher pointed out, it's something that Atlantic Canada wouldn't have even thought possible a decade or so ago. Our productivity and skilled labour supply lagged behind the rest of the country. In the past decade, we've seen a huge turnaround. In fact, the Public Policy Forum has called this "an explosion of innovation led by a new generation of entrepreneurs". In fact, in Atlantic Canada our GDP per capita and growth in education attainment have outpaced the national average since 2015. DIANA is the reason we were successful in our "team Atlantic" effort to land DIANA in Halifax. It's because of this change in the ground rules.

Here are these two important things, yet HISF and DIANA are going to be voted on in the coming hours. It's unfortunate that our Conservative colleagues are poised to vote against both of them.

I'd like to ask all of you—whoever would like to respond—about the value HISF brings to the Canadian Armed Forces and our role in the world, and the same question about DIANA.

What is the importance of the innovation in the defence and peacekeeping space that will come out of DIANA? What is important there for our role in the world?

• (1625)

Hon. Bill Blair: Thanks very much, Andy.

First of all, that was the first time I had ever had the opportunity to attend the Halifax International Security Forum. It's an extraordinary forum. It was a place of dialogue and exchange with international partners. The bilats that I was able to attend with international partners from across Canada and around the world were really quite extraordinary. I think it's an incredibly important forum.

I also wanted to acknowledge the members of this committee. We had the largest parliamentary delegation, from all parties, at the HISF in its 15-year history.

I think the participation of Canadian parliamentarians from all parties is critically important. As part of that, we saw a great delegation from the U.S., but it was matched by an equally great delegation from Canada. I think that was very important.

It is the largest international security forum held in a democratic country that only democratic countries attend. I think it did facilitate. It creates an opportunity for dialogue that can't occur in any other place. It strengthens relationships and it strengthens partnerships and I think it strengthens resolve. We learn from each other, and the country and the world are made safer places, particularly for democracies, as a result of the dialogue that takes place at HISF.

It's a really valuable thing, and I think Halifax is exactly the right place for it, by the way. Halifax is, for the Canadian Armed Forces, its birthplace and heartbeat in many respects. I had the opportunity to visit the Irving shipyard, for example, where we're building our Arctic and offshore patrol ships, and where we're going to be building the new surface combatant ship. I got to meet with the workforce there. It's energized, enthusiastic, and in exactly the right place.

Situating DIANA in Halifax also makes perfect sense for us, but it's not just an opportunity for Halifax; it's an opportunity for

Canada and it's an opportunity for NATO to continue to be innovative and to attract new ideas, new approaches.

One of the things we've seen with a significantly increasingly dangerous world is innovation and new challenges coming from our potential adversaries, particularly Russia and China. The only way we're going to keep up is if we energize and support innovators in free countries. DIANA plays an incredibly important role in that.

If I could also mention it, there was one other thing I got to announce when I was in Halifax, and it's a new \$155-million investment in a new training facility for CFB Halifax. When I went out to Halifax and visited with Admiral Topshee, he showed me the training facilities and he explained the need for us to do more and do better, so we're now funding the building of a new training facility in Halifax. Again, it's the right place to do it and the right thing to do.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fillmore, and thank you to the Halifax Chamber of Commerce once again.

• (1630)

Hon. Bill Blair: I've become a big fan.

The Chair: You might become a charter member of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce if Mr. Fillmore has his way.

With that, colleagues, we'll suspend while we allow the minister to leave. Then we'll re-empanel, but I'll need guidance from members.

Bells are supposed to start at 5:15. If we're going to put in an hour with the other witnesses, I'll need unanimous consent to go to 5:30. Is that acceptable?

I see that 5:15 is fine. What about the rest? We don't have unanimous consent to do anything other than go until the bells, so we have 45 minutes.

Thank you, Minister Blair, for your attendance. You can stay for another 45 minutes if you wish.

Hon. Bill Blair: I'm trying to talk quietly so as to not.... I really enjoy sitting and talking to these people.

The Chair: It's nice of us to give you the opportunity to talk to your staff.

I'm assuming, Mr. Matthews, you have no further opening statements, so we'll continue on with the—

Who needs to join the table?

[*Translation*]

Mr. St-Pierre, welcome to the committee.

[*English*]

Okay. We're now into our second hour and the second round. I have Ms. Gallant for the first six minutes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you. Are we going to have testimony first or are we continuing?

DND is still operating on DRMIS, a 30-year-old program. A replacement system, DefenceX, is already an entire year behind. With a budget size upwards of a billion dollars, will the DefenceX system also be hit with the Liberal cut to the defence budget?

Mr. Bill Matthews (Deputy Minister, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of points on DRMIS. It is a key system. As we upgrade to DefenceX, it will broaden our capability to digitize and will actually be quite key to the transformation that we're looking to do across the system in a number of areas. We are looking to rationalize and reduce spending on contracting as part of the reductions. DRMIS's replacement is a critical project for us in terms of moving forward.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Is it going to still be delivered within the billion-dollar cut?

Mr. Bill Matthews: The work to identify—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Give a yes or no, Mr. Matthews.

Mr. Bill Matthews: I can't give a yes or no, Mr. Chair, because the work to identify the final spending reductions has not yet been completed, so I can't be unequivocal. However, DefenceX is critical for our transformation.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

For our CSE representative, welcome.

Is there a direct line of communication established when a cyber-attack occurs, whereby the CSE and the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security alert the relevant government departments targeted?

Ms. Caroline Xavier (Chief, Communications Security Establishment, Communications Security Establishment): Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

Yes, CSE works hand in glove with many partners across the nation, as well as internationally. Therefore, when a cyber-incident becomes known to the cyber centre, for example, we make all efforts to contact any victim that may be impacted. Whether it's a private stakeholder, critical infrastructure or a province, we are able to have that direct communication with that organization.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Just this September, a denial-of-service attack from an Indian hacker group briefly brought down the CAF's main website and the House of Commons website for a few hours. This is with a relatively minor cyber-attack, with nothing stolen, yet it speaks volumes on how poorly our cyber system is operating.

What has CSE and the cyber centre done since then to reinforce our cybersecurity?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Every department is managed by Shared Services Canada, so we work hand in glove with Shared Services Canada as well as with the department CIO and Treasury Board to ensure that the necessary measures are in place to protect from denials of service.

That said, a denial of service, as you mentioned, does not automatically mean that data is stolen. However, we do continue to work with everyone to ensure that the necessary measures are in place to add robustness and rigour to the protection.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Just this October, a more serious ransomware attack targeted BGRS and its server, which are responsible for moving our troops. They stole personal data dating back to 1999. A cybercriminal group known as LockBit was identified. LockBit 3.0 ransomware is up at an increasing severity across the world. How is CSE's cyber centre responding to this threat that LockBit poses?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: We are not able to comment directly on any of the incidents we manage, but what I can tell you with regard to BGRS is that we were informed by the company on September 29 of the cyber-incident, and we have offered our assistance to help them in any manner we can.

Since we were advised of the cyber-incident, we, along with Treasury Board and many other government departments, have been working collectively to ensure that we offer the necessary support to the server of BGRS. However, it is now deemed a privacy breach, and that is being led by the Treasury Board Secretariat.

• (1635)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: BGRS moves our military, so it stands to reason that the military would have been notified. However, when my office started getting complaints from the people who were supposed to move from point A to point B to serve in the military at a specific point in time, the minister's office didn't know. Why was that direct link not made between the attack and notifying the minister's office?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: I don't know if national defence officials would like to take that question. That said, we were advised by BGRS on September 29. If the company knew before that, they didn't advise us before September 29.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: That's not what I'm asking. I'm asking when CSE advised the ministry of national defence. Also, is there a required time frame between the time when you know and when you're supposed to let the related or affected ministry know?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: The minute we know of a cyber-incident that could be impacting a department, we advise them immediately.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The problem is, then, working up the department hierarchy chain to let the minister know.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: If the cyber centre is made aware.... For example, in the case of the BGRS, the minute we would have known, we would have advised. What I'm trying to say to you is that we became aware of the incident by BGRS on September 29. The minute we all knew, we took the necessary action to ensure that everybody was made aware.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: There are different attacks on our infrastructure all the time. At NORAD, they have the major points of critical infrastructure on their map and they can see what's happening.

Is there a similar sort of real-time, situational awareness available to the related departments, so that when we have hospital after hospital attacked, somebody is putting this together and suggesting that maybe we should find out if the problem is with the cloud they're all using? Where does the follow-up begin, or is it just a reporting system and nothing's really investigated, sorted out and enforced?

Ms. Caroline Xavier: Just to be clear, with regard to the cyber centre and the Communications Security Establishment, in our role we are an incident responder, but we do provide technical support and technical information protection to Government of Canada systems. That means the Government of Canada systems that we manage directly. We are not the ones who protect, for example, the provincial hospitals.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: But they report to you when they have a breach.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: They may report to us.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: They're not required to.

Ms. Caroline Xavier: It's not required. It's not automatic. However, because of all the great relationships we have with critical infrastructure sectors, many of them do work hand in glove with us and report to us all the various incidents that may happen.

The Chair: I'm sure we'd like to carry on with this conversation, but we're not going to.

With that, Madam Lambropoulos has the floor for six minutes.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for being here with us today.

I'm going to stick to the issue of culture and the much-needed culture change at the Canadian Armed Forces.

StatsCan released its report, based on a 2022 survey, and found that 3.5% of CAF personnel were sexually assaulted by another military member, either in the workplace or outside the workplace. This was a significant increase from 2018, when only 1.6% reported being sexually assaulted. The majority of victims said they did not report the assaults to authorities because they felt it wouldn't make a difference.

We have heard from you on several occasions, and it's been told to us that it has been addressed. I'd like to know what exactly it means to say that it's been addressed when the victims themselves feel that it won't make a difference. Has it not been told to CAF members as a whole that it's not acceptable and that there will be consequences if someone is found guilty of doing something like this?

Lieutenant-General Frances J. Allen (Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Canadian Armed Forces, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

Let me say before I respond to your question directly that the results of the survey are of great concern to us. We take it very, very seriously. It's really important to us that we actually get these results from the StatsCan survey, because it helps to shape and inform our way forward. It's a way in which we can continue the transparency that we need in order to move forward in this particular area and to create the change in culture going forward.

When it comes to reporting, it's a complex and, I would say, quite a personal issue for the many different members who are involved. While we have been working to create many different ways for people to report—through the Canadian Human Rights Commission to their chain of command, through the elimination of the requirement for them to report on themselves from the duty to report perspective, or to go to the police—we still have more work to do in creating ways and opportunities for people to feel safe coming forward.

The part of the report that spoke about reprisals and the concern about reprisals was of great concern to us. That is completely unacceptable and it will counter the work we're doing to make avenues of reporting available to members if they feel that there will be consequences. This is something that we're taking very seriously and that we have to work on. We need to actually go through the stats and the details of what we're seeing in that report. It has a lot of detail for us to really get at, identifying what those next steps are and the next things that we need to do.

This is a long-term process, but we are committed to that process. We'll continue to be as transparent as we can. Publishing this report publicly is very important to us.

● (1640)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Thank you.

In that same report, one-third of the victims said they believed the perpetrator's use of alcohol played a significant role in the assault. Many people use alcohol as a coping mechanism, which brings us to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

I'm wondering about the issue of people not feeling safe going to see a therapist and about the stigma around mental health. Having them need to go see a therapist is one thing, but are there things being implemented in the culture, in the routines they go through, that are actually addressing a better and safer culture that also addresses mental health? This may be a way of coming around to not necessarily having people raise their hand to say that they need help but integrating it into their daily activities. Is there any thought on a way to include that kind of strategy?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Mr. Chair, I think I may have missed a part in the middle of the question. I apologize if I'm not exactly hitting the mark on your question. We had a bit of a delay in transmission there.

When it comes to mental health and to removing the stigma associated with mental health, it is something that we have to focus on and concentrate on. The deputy minister and I are both co-chairs for mental wellness and mental health within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. We know about and we hear from the members about the issues and the challenges that are associated with feeling like they can readily access mental health services without stigma attached to it.

I understand, Mr. Chair, that there was a question around alcohol that started as a question. I'm not quite sure how it connected to the back end of the question. I would be happy to address the first part if the member would like to respond.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: I just said that there is probably a relationship between alcohol use and mental health issues, possibly as a coping mechanism.

Are there any ways of integrating mental health supports without necessarily singling out members and having them go and get that kind of help themselves? Are there activities in the armed forces or is there something that you can integrate within the daily routines that would also address this mental health issue or improve people's mental health within the forces?

The Chair: Answer very briefly, please.

LGen Frances J. Allen: Certainly we have health promotion programs within the Canadian Armed Forces. We have programs—the road to mental wellness, the road to mental health—that are all about seeing and recognizing and that everybody should know about. It's not just about somebody who just may feel like they have challenges. We try to incorporate that.

As we move into holiday periods, for example, we have more promotions around it because we recognize that the loneliness and the sense of loss that some people may feel in those holiday periods can be quite challenging, so we try to increase promotional discussions around that at certain times of the year. We do try to incorporate it into our programs.

• (1645)

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

Madame Normandin, you have six minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Once again, I'd like to thank all the witnesses for being with us today.

My question is for all the witnesses.

The Standing Committee on National Defence recommended in a report that military personnel transfers be limited. Just last week, Brigadier-General Tattersall told us that transfers were also a financial issue because of the legal costs associated with them.

In addition, there are costs related to Brookfield Global Relocation Services, or BGRS, the subcontractor that handles the moves.

In that context, has the Department of National Defence done an analysis of the savings that could be achieved if transfers were limited?

[*English*]

LGen Frances J. Allen: I think we've been examining the impacts of the many transfers that can happen in a person's career as they move from position to position, first to gain the experiences they need to be able to do their jobs, but also to help them gain new experiences to advance as they move up in rank and responsibility in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Certainly I would agree 100% that in the past we often transferred people on a clock, as opposed to based upon a requirement to do so. We've certainly taken the opportunity to not only question ourselves on that, but we've also seen that it's an element of dissatisfaction for members of the Canadian Armed Forces as well. As we take a look at retention as an important part of our program, not moving people unnecessarily and disrupting their families is something that we have to do.

I've not seen any specific data that looks at the financial savings associated with a reduction in the moves of x number of the percentage.... I mean, we certainly know the number of moves every year, and if we were to decrease by a certain percentage.... It's been much more focused on limiting the moves and the transfers that are needed for the purposes that are required, and not just because a clock has ticked past and said, "You've been somewhere for two years and it's time to move on."

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

I would certainly encourage you to conduct a financial analysis of what is generally considered to be an irritant, as \$900 million in budget cuts have been announced.

Mr. Matthews, do you want to add a comment?

Mr. Bill Matthews: Yes, thank you.

I have not yet seen an assessment of a possible reduction in expenses related to military transfers. However, as the Lieutenant-General mentioned, we have to strike a balance between the development of military members and the impact of the transfers on their families. For example, when families move, they have to find new specialists, such as doctors. That has real consequences for people. If we could mitigate those negative effects on families, we could improve our retention numbers.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

A little earlier, there was talk of budget cuts in terms of contracting out.

I'm well aware that the total number of subcontracts awarded is not \$900 million, although you didn't want to answer the question directly. However, if these cuts are needed, other people will still have to ensure that certain contracts are implemented. It's likely that the work will come back to the public service and the military.

To what extent will the public service and the military be able to take on the work currently being contracted out?

Does that mean that the work done by subcontractors was completely useless? So in some cases, the work would not have to be done by military personnel or public servants?

Mr. Bill Matthews: It depends. If we look at the different types of contracts, we see that the tasks involved vary greatly.

[*English*]

Excuse me; I'm going to switch to English.

We're looking right now at how we can consolidate contracts in some of the types of contracting we have. Multiple parts of the organization have contracts for similar things. There are absolute savings to be had by consolidating those. There is other work that is truly optional, and maybe we can eliminate it.

There is, indeed, the work on which the member posed her question, which must be done. Is there a better way to do it without contractors? In some cases, we think there is potential for civilians to undertake that work, but I would also stress that we are in an environment where we are down in numbers on the military side. We're already asking civilians, where possible, to pick up some of that slack, so I wouldn't hold out a lot of potential there.

The one thing I should share that our unions have raised with us is that on some occasions, effectively, we have contractors who are in the workplace five days a week for jobs that the unions think a public servant could do. There is a question about whether that work could be done more efficiently if it were effectively turned back into a public service job. That's a really interesting question we are going to look at.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

If I understand correctly, the potential for financial gain is quite limited if we eliminate subcontracting.

With regard to the retention and recruitment targets, has there been an update on what's been done over the past year? I imagine that this must be reflected in the votes, since there are increases or decreases in salary benefits.

What's the status of that? Can you give us a general idea?

[*English*]

LGen Frances J. Allen: Our current projections are that we are not yet at the point where we're going to break even this year, if I can make that statement—the point where we are recruiting as many people as would be leaving through attrition.

As you're aware, our efforts in this area have to go across all three areas: We need to attract people; we need to recruit them into the military; we need to retain them for the period of time that they are interested in being in the military as well as for the period of time that is effective and allows them to flourish as individuals.

Attrition is a normal thing—

The Chair: Unfortunately, we have to leave the answer there.

Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Thank you.

I'd actually like to pick up from where Ms. Lambropoulos was going in terms of mental health conversations and the discussions there.

One of my concerns is that I had filed an Order Paper question, and it started to break down psychiatrists, psychologists, medical professionals, doctors, social workers, mental health nurses and addiction counsellors. In fact, those services are being provided by Calian, which is a for-profit corporation. It is filling 91% of psychiatrist positions on the base and 34% of total health care providers.

These bases don't have a single in-house public servant or medical professional dedicated to those mental health services. When you talk about those programs being offered, it's from that for-profit company. It's not by specific individuals who are consistently there and are seeing patients regularly. It's through these online services or what have you. Ultimately, those for-profit companies will do it for profit as their sole first purpose.

Mr. Matthews, you talked about looking at the interesting idea of bringing back those services in-house. It's been pushed a great deal by the unions involved, and certainly it's of key concern to what's going on in the mental health status of CAF and DND.

Could you comment further on what is preventing you from actually moving forward?

Mr. Bill Matthews: I think there are a few things. The health services that were summarized by the member are a shining example of one of the areas where we should look. There is absolutely a place for these types of contracted health services where there is a need for a surge capacity or a temporary capacity or when there is a shortage of availability of people who are willing to be public servants.

Where I think the question gets interesting is if you have the same service day in and day out being offered by a contractor. Is it a more efficient model to bring that service in-house? We will look at it. We don't have data right now, so we're trying to gather some data. We have asked the unions if they have examples to share with us, and I'm sure they will.

On online services, I am very good with that. That's a very useful way to deliver things efficiently.

I think it's a matter of questioning where we have the contracted resources. Is it truly the right model? If it's surge capacity, that's great. If there are people who only want to work part time and don't want to become public servants under our compensation regime, we'll accept that. There may be savings there and a way to effectively deliver services more efficiently.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: What's your timeline for those studies and getting that data?

Mr. Bill Matthews: We haven't got a timeline per se right now.

It's really interesting timing because of the reductions exercise we were talking about earlier. Those reductions ramp up over a four-year period. I think that work will be really interesting, both from an efficiency and quality of service perspective as well as in terms of a potential—"potential" is a key word here—for savings.

• (1655)

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I'll move on, but it's in the same vein.

I've repeatedly tried to bring up the issue of the non-public funds workers. Military family members are 40% of those workers, and they're really quite essential to the defence community, I would argue.

Non-public funds workers in Quebec have just adopted a very strong strike mandate. Petawawa's non-public funds workers have received their report from the public interest commission. They're feeling very undervalued. They are being paid below the federal minimum wage. There's a huge regional imbalance because there is a refusal to adopt a national pay grid. When will your department finally commit to providing that national living wage for all of those NPF workers?

Mr. Bill Matthews: General Allen may have things to add on this one.

There are a couple of things here. Non-public funds workers absolutely provide a critical role on base in the services they offer. There are some agreements that have been recently reached. There are others that are in various stages in the negotiation process, including strike votes. We will let those run their course. They are not federal public servants, so they're not part of the same compensation and benefit regime that federal public servants are.

I think the only thing I should share, Mr. Chair, is that after our last meeting, I did go back to check, and I asked whether any of the individuals in Canada are being paid below the minimum wage. The answer I got back was no, that's not the case. You and I have different information on that front. If you have more information, then I'm happy to take that back.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: One thing that we learned from committee last week was from Mr. Chambers. We were talking about the outsourcing of maintenance facilities and, again, that contracting out of public service jobs. Given the Treasury Board's directive to cut management consulting services, as has been put out there by the minister, can you provide an update for this committee on whether you've signed any follow-up contracts with Deloitte on the real property operations portfolio? How much was given to Deloitte through these contracts?

Mr. Bill Matthews: I do not have that information with me, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to take that back and see if there's an update there. I have nothing for you today. I'm sorry.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Colleagues, we have 25 minutes' worth of questions and less than 20 minutes' worth of time, assuming that bells start ringing at 5:15. I'm going to do four minutes for everyone and then one and a half minutes and one and a half minutes.

With that, Mr. Lloyd, welcome to the committee. You have four minutes.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all of the witnesses for coming today.

My questions will be focused on you, Lieutenant-General Allen.

It's been said that there's a culture issue in the Canadian Forces. We've talked about the sexual misconduct. I want to talk about another side of this culture.

It seems to me that the backbone of any military's performance and competence requires a moral strength that's grounded in a belief in our communities, our country, the ability of our forces and camaraderie not only with your fellow soldiers but with your commanders and the nation.

Do you believe that our government and our military are doing everything they can to ensure that those fundamentals for our moral strength are being met in the Canadian Forces?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

Certainly I would say that for us, on values and ethics.... There was the recent revitalization of Trusted to Serve, which is the foundation of the ethos and ethics of the Canadian Armed Forces. I believe it was back in 2022. It is the basis of trust. It is the basis of ethical behaviour. It's obviously the basis of the nature of the environment we must be in to do the work we do in our jobs and for ourselves to be Canadians within the communities we have, going forward.

At a foundational level, at bases and wings distributed around the country, members of the Canadian Armed Forces quickly become members of their community as well. It is about working with members of the local community, where we engage in sports programs and coach each other's kids. I think there's a strong connection between members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the communities they're in, and therefore the Canadians they serve, going forward.

It is important to us in the Canadian Armed Forces that we build strong connections with our communities, because we know it's an important home for us as we move from community to community. I would say strongly that we, within the Canadian Armed Forces, think it's important as a basis for us, moving forward.

• (1700)

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I know it's a very recent change, but are we seeing results in terms of increased recruitment and retention in the Canadian Forces?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I would say it is still a work in progress as we go forward. We are building capabilities to work towards the culture change we see is needed.

When we think about some of the programs we've put in place to promote that, we talk about the challenges we face around the ethical circumstances we can find ourselves in. What do you do about that? How do you think about it?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: I understand when you talk about the ethical side—it's been talked about a lot—but what about pride in our country and in our Canadian Forces? What are we doing to promote that pride in our young people in this country and to inspire them to serve, as previous generations have served? What are we doing right now, as a government and a military, to imbue that pride in our communities?

LGen Frances J. Allen: I would say that people join the Canadian Armed Forces for very different reasons. Everybody in the Canadian Armed Forces feels a very strong sense of service and a sense of the obligation they signed up for—what they're doing for their fellow Canadians, going forward. That probably doesn't exist for most people as they're walking into a recruiting centre. It's what you find when you get into the Canadian Armed Forces and start to feel the effects of the missions and of the support you provide.

The first part, when it comes to attraction.... It's probably about attracting people to the opportunities the Canadian Armed Forces offers to them as they look to a career. Then, as they're in the Canadian Armed Forces, they start to feel and see the sense of community and sense of obligation.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: What is specifically being done—

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

Mr. Fillmore, you have four minutes.

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Thanks very much, panel.

To answer Mr. Lloyd, one thing we're doing to create a sense of pride is Halifax International Fleet Week. I invite you to learn more about that.

Today I'd like to talk to you about space, Lieutenant-General.

In the coming months, this committee will be undertaking a study on space that I was inspired to initiate based on successive years of conversations at the Halifax International Security Forum and discussions with industry leaders. I'm very happy to see today, on the U.S. Department of Defense's website, that Canada participated in the meeting of the combined space operations initiative principals board, or CSpO, in Berlin recently. I think that is a very positive sign.

It seems very clear that space is, if not the final frontier in defence policy, certainly the next frontier. The committee is eager to learn more about how Canada is preparing for this shift, including what's happening with the armed forces in the 3 Canadian space division.

I wonder if we can take the time remaining to talk about how Canada is preparing to occupy the space of space domestically, and how we're going to be doing that with our international partners.

LGen Frances J. Allen: We all think that space is—and I don't mean to be punny—the next frontier, but it truly is, as one of the domains, an area we need to lean into.

Often we don't think about how dependent on space we are to live our day-to-day lives when you check your watch or when the GPS in your car directs you to where you're going. Our reliance on space in our day-to-day functions simply passes over our heads because it's become such an integral part of our lives.

In that way, as we talk about space from a military perspective and a reliance on space to be able to achieve military effects going forward, it's so clear that we have to make sure we are thinking about the use of space, the protection of space and the protection of our reliance on space assets to be able to execute our military functions going forward. Whether it's surveillance of the ground, timing and precision navigation that we often get from space, or understanding the threats that are approaching our shores, space is a big player there.

It's not a place that anybody engages in alone. As you said, it is a very strong international community, and not only from a military perspective; from even just a military perspective, it is closely connected with commercial industry and space commercial industries.

I had a conversation with the commander of space division about force development and how to think about the next thing we need and where space is in that. If you're thinking about things you want to try to do by yourself in space, you're going to approach it the wrong way. You need to think about where the space industry is going and how to leverage where the space industry is taking us. Capitalize on that innovation and that development so that we can ensure the military requirements we have can be leveraged through commercial assets and through engagement with commercial entities, because space is very much managed as an international entity.

● (1705)

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Thank you. I love how that came back naturally to DIANA.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fillmore.

Madame Normandin, you have a minute and a half.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

In 2017, Canada promised to establish a rapid reaction force. We know that if we had done so, we might have been able to respond to the Americans' request and intervene in Haiti, for example, rather than awarding a contract by mutual agreement to one of their companies—to appease them because Canada may not be the ally they'd hoped for.

Where are we on the rapid reaction force?

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Matthews: Since that period of time, there's been no deployment of a rapid intervention force, so there's really not much more I can say beyond that right now. There's been no deployment.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: I'm well aware that there have been no deployments. No force has been established. I'm talking about a promise that was made but not delivered.

Are there any plans to follow through on that promise?

Mr. Bill Matthews: I would say no, not at this time. Ms. Allen may know something about this.

[English]

LGen Frances J. Allen: I don't have anything else to add to that.

The Chair: Ms. Mathysen, you have a minute and a half.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: The minister was answering a question from Mr. Bezan earlier about working with GDLS in my riding and ramping up production on the LAVs to send those vehicles to Ukraine.

I'd like to hear if you can confirm to us whether GDLS has those vehicles produced, if they're on hand and ready to meet our commitments to Ukraine and when they will be delivered.

Mr. Bill Matthews: There are a couple of points here, and my colleague Nancy might wish to add more.

GDLS continues to produce the vehicles. Ukraine is certainly interested in them, as are the Canadian Armed Forces. We are trying to find the balance in terms of what comes off the production line and when, in terms of where they go. This contract was put in place initially as part of a project for the Canadian army because of the vehicles they needed to do their work. We have not yet finalized the schedule as to when vehicles will be shipped to Ukraine.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: That's interesting, because ultimately I believe there is a delay on your end and not their end.

Mr. Bill Matthews: There are a couple of points that are important here. One is the production schedule. We are working with GDLS to ramp up production or speed up production so that we can get vehicles for the Canadian Armed Forces and for Ukraine more quickly. I expect we'll have news in a month or so in terms of what the rough schedule looks like, but we're still working that through.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

We'll go to Mr. Bezan for four minutes.

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

I want to follow up on some of the comments earlier about funding to Operation Reassurance and the funding for Ukraine. I'm just looking at the fall fiscal update. It shows a decline in military assistance to Ukraine: this fiscal year, \$816 million dollars; next year, \$318 million; the year after that, \$197 million. The dollars are declining, and that's where I was talking from. It's either not being there to support Ukraine or just running out of cash and running out of equipment to donate.

It's the same on Operation Reassurance. Money ramps up, up to 2025, and then drops right down, with adjustments in 2027-28 cutting it by half a billion dollars, with a total cut of \$141 million over the next five years. That's coming right out of the government's own numbers.

I want to talk about equipment. We know the state of repairs on our existing Leopard 2 tanks that are sitting in Canada, the ones we haven't deployed to Latvia and the ones we have already donated. The ones that are sitting here in Canada are sitting in storage and are barely usable to train on at this point in time. We know that of the howitzers that we have left—we donated a dozen or so to Ukraine—only about four or five are operational. How do we main-

tain training of our forces when we can't keep our equipment in maintenance and overhaul so it is usable?

• (1710)

LGen Frances J. Allen: Mr. Chair, maybe I can start, and then I can perhaps turn to my colleague Ms. Tremblay, as it pertains to questions related to maintenance contracts and the like.

Certainly the member is 100% correct with respect to having equipment to train upon being an important part of force generation.

All equipment is not always in use all the time, so equipment sharing has been a traditional way in which force generation training has been able to proceed even with less than a one-for-one equipment-to-unit ratio, but it's not necessarily ideal, and there are probably cost implications that are associated with that.

There is also the importance of exercises as that force generation function, and then making sure that the equipment you have that is ready for exercises or for force employment can also deliver force generation function moving forward.

Mr. James Bezan: But then how are you training? What I'm hearing from our troops at different bases across this country is that a company's strength is supposed to be nearing 200 soldiers, and we're down to 120. Where we're supposed to have seven or eight LAVs, we're only running four or five, because we don't have enough LAVs that are usable at this point in time. We heard during the Liberal decade of darkness that instead of giving our troops bullets, we're training them to go around and go "bang, bang". Are we going back to that, especially with this billion-dollar cut that the Liberals have done to our Canadian Armed Forces?

LGen Frances J. Allen: Perhaps I'll let Ms. Tremblay speak to the initiatives to try to improve spare parts going forward first, and then I can perhaps speak to any other training elements after that.

Ms. Nancy Tremblay (Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Materiel, Department of National Defence): What I can say on the sustainment of equipment is that we're working very hard to make sure that we provide the right equipment that is safe and available to the Canadian—

Mr. James Bezan: I'll stop you there. Before my time runs out, I just want to move the following motion:

That the committee report to the House, based on testimony:

1. the state of munitions production and procurement in Canada is abysmal;
2. the state of readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces is declining; and
3. the Canadian Armed Forces possesses insufficient quantities of certain munitions.

That the committee call on the Government to:

- a. reverse the \$1-billion budget cut announced by the Liberal government to the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces;
- b. expand munitions production in Canada;
- c. increase munition exports to Ukraine; and

d. support the development of weapons and munitions manufacturing capabilities in Ukraine by Canadian industry.

The Chair: Okay. It's tabled. It's in order. It's a subject matter before the court, and his time is expired.

Mr. James Bezan: I'd like to circulate it in both French and English.

The Chair: Now we go to Mr. Collins for a final four minutes.

I am assuming, colleagues, that if the bells start ringing, you'll allow Mr. Collins to complete his four minutes. Thank you.

Mr. James Bezan: I have a motion on the floor.

The Chair: You've got a motion on the floor, but we're not going to debate it.

Mr. James Bezan: It's my right to debate it. It's in order.

The Chair: I'm sorry. You are right. I apologize.

Mr. James Bezan: I did give notice.

The Chair: Yes. I apologize.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I do thank our witnesses for appearing and providing testimony today, along with the minister, but just let me say this: We have heard through a number of our studies now that we have serious problems in procurement and that we have serious problems in the production of munitions in this country. I do welcome the announcement by the minister, but whether that would...

If you want in, you have to move a point of order.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): I have a point of order.

I'm wondering if we can also share it for those who are online, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

Mr. James Bezan: The clerk has a copy of it.

I will keep on explaining behind the conversation here.

We've seen two reports coming from the Department of National Defence, both the performance report from the department and the Roussy report that was done under the MINDS program on our air force. In addition to that, we saw Vice-Admiral Topshee's video on the state of readiness of our maritime fleet.

It is deeply concerning for all of us that our ability to defend Canada, our ability to be a reliable ally under NATO and our ability to take on any extra roles with the concern around the PRC and its aggressive posture that we're seeing in the Strait of Taiwan in the South China Sea, especially along the east Thomas Shoal, and in its interactions with the Philippines and its ongoing aggression towards Japan.... We have to be severely concerned that the state of readiness within the Canadian Armed Forces has been undermined.

We also know that Ukraine is in the fight of its life, that the conflict continues to drag on, that it has now become fairly entrenched on both sides and that the line is not moving much these days. Every day, Ukraine sends forward its soldiers, who are sacrificing themselves for the benefit of NATO and the rest of the world and standing up for freedom and liberty—

● (1715)

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Bezan. The bells are ringing. I have to adjourn this meeting.

Mr. James Bezan: You mean suspend.

The Chair: No, we'll adjourn.

The meeting is adjourned.

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