

02-08-1991 Corey Wells and Billy Hynes Clearance Divers – Hull Search



**Master Seaman
William HYNES,
HMCS
Margaree, Feb
8, 1991**



**Sub-Lieutenant
Corey WELLS, HMCS
Margaree, Feb 8,
1991**

The Wednesday Report

http://navydiver.ca/Documents/News/Margaree_Deaths.pdf

February 13, 1991

QUESTIONS REMAIN AFTER CANADIAN NAVY DIVERS' DEATHS

Two Canadian navy divers from HMCS Margaree drowned Friday off the Madeira Islands, Portugese territories about 250 kilometers off the coast of North Africa. Master Seaman William Hynes, 31, of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia and Sub-Lieutenant Corey Wells, 27, of Halifax were trapped inside a seawater intake pipe used to cool the engines of USS Pharris, a Knox (Mod) class guided missile cruiser. Margaree and Pharris were at the Madeira capital's port at Funchal at the time of the accident. Naval spokesmen are saying little about the incident and an investigation is under way. Questions are being raised as to how the two divers came to be sucked into the vent. The two ships were on station with the NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFLORANT) at the time. Margaree is due back in Halifax later next month.

- **Master Seaman William HYNES, HMCS Margaree, Feb 8, 1991**
- **Sub-Lieutenant Corey WELLS, HMCS Margaree, Feb 8, 1991**



WELLS, William Cory

http://www.forposterityssake.ca/Navy/HMCS_MARGAREE_230.htm



SLt, V65003577

Died - 08 Feb 1991

For Posterity's Sake
A Royal Canadian Navy Historical
Project



In memory of those who have Crossed the Bar

	<p>William Cory Wells</p> <p>Sub-Lieutenant, V65003577, C.A.F.</p> <p>Born: 05 Feb 1964, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia</p> <p>Died: 08 Feb 1991, Funchal, Madeira</p>	 <p>Book of Remembrance</p>
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In loving memory of Sub-Lieutenant Cory Wells, whose life was taken in a diving accident while serving in HMCS Margaree February 8, 1991. A smile for all, a heart of gold, One of the best, the world could hold. Always thoughtful, loving and kind, These are the memories you left behind. Forever loved and sadly missed by mom, Scott, Nina and family, Cherri and family. (Halifax Chronicle-Herald 08 Feb 2019)

Ships served in:
[HMCS MARGAREE](#)

Cory Wells

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/152184464/william-cory-wells>

Sub-Lieutenant Wells died on service, in a diving accident; Sub-Lieutenant William Cory WELLS also perished in this accident. [Master Seaman William Eldon HYNES CD](#) also perished in this accident.

From the Canadian Virtual War Memorial-

Military Service:-

Rank: Sub-Lieutenant

Service Number: V65003577

Age: 27

Force: Royal Canadian Navy

Unit: HMCS 'Margaree'



SLt Cory Wells, HMCS Margaree January 1991 - off Portugal one week before his death
Source: Canadian Virtual War Memorial (CVWM)

He enlisted on 11 Jan 1984 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Son of John Richard and Sylvia Iris Wells of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; brother of Scott; husband of Dawn Louise (née McIntosh) Wells of Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Sub-Lieutenant William Cory Wells is commemorated on Page 191 of the 'In the Service of Canada' Book of Remembrance.

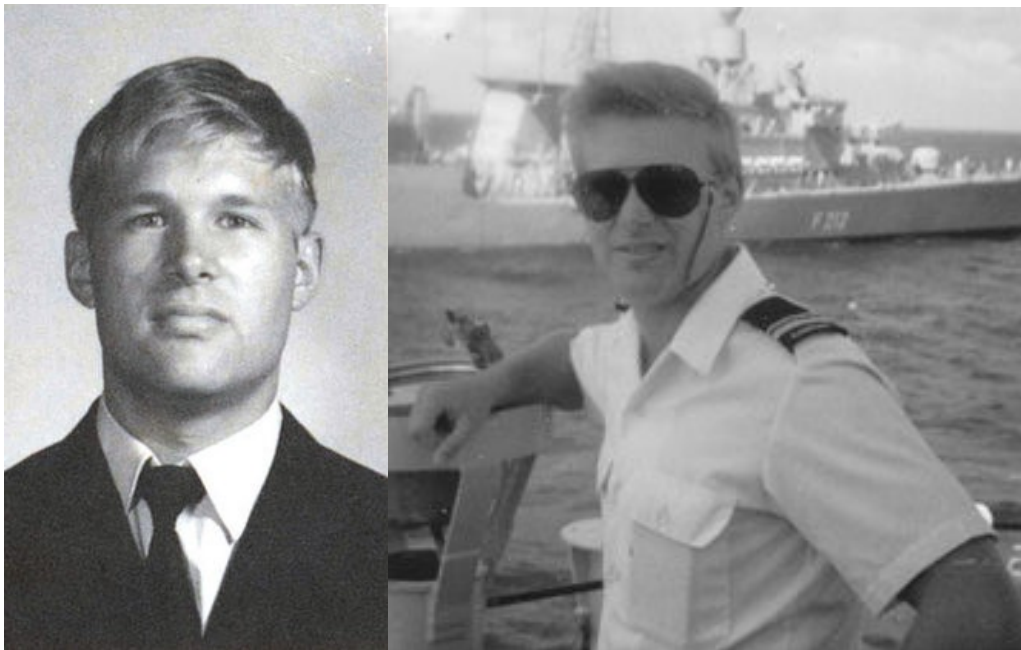
BIRTH 5 Feb 1964
Dartmouth, Halifax County, Nova Scotia, Canada

DEATH 8 Feb 1991 (aged 27)
Funchal, Funchal Municipality, Madeira Region, Portugal

BURIAL [Dartmouth Memorial Gardens](#)
Dartmouth, Halifax County, Nova Scotia, Canada

PLOT Garden of Prayer, Lot 1404, Grave C4

MEMORIAL ID 152184464 · [View Source](#)



Added by [laurinlaurin espie](#)



**For Posterity's Sake
Royal Canadian Navy Historical
Project**



In memory of those who have Crossed the Bar

	<p>William Eldon Hynes, CD</p> <p>Master Seaman, N25119209, C.A.F.</p> <p>Born: 26 Aug 1959 Died: 08 Feb 1991, Funchal, Madeira</p>	<p>Book of Remembrance</p>
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HYNES, William Eldon, CD, MS, N25119209, C.A.F. - died 26 Aug 1969, HMCS MARGAREE - Son of Edward and Elsie Hynes. Husband of Deborah D. Hynes of Bauline, Newfoundland.

MS Hynes died in a diving accident at Funchal, Madeira.

Ships served in:
[HMCS MARGAREE](#)

Hynes, William Eldon

Evening Telegram February 14, 1991 (Thursday)

http://ngb.chebucto.org/Newspaper-Obits/hynes_obit_h.shtml

Master Seaman, C.D. of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Died **Friday, February 8, 1991**, in Madeira Islands, Portugal, age 31 years. Born in St. John's, he is the son of Edward and Elsie (White) Hynes, St. John's. He was employed with the Canadian Armed Services as a Fire Controlman. He is survived by his wife, the former Deborah LeGrow; three sons, Dwayne, Charles and Michael, all at home; one sister Wanda (Mrs. Greg Whalen), Bauline; father and mother-in-law, Charles and Ruth LeGrow, Bauline; maternal grandfather, Mr. George White, Glovertown. Predeceased by maternal grandmother Mrs. Jessie White (Oakley), and paternal grandparents William and Annie (Walsh) Hynes. Remains resting at Carnell's Funeral Home on Friday, February 15th, 7-9 p.m. and Saturday, February 16th, 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. Funeral service will be held on Sunday, February 17th at 2:30 p.m. from the Salvation Citadel, Adams Avenue, Major William Reader officiating. Burial in the Salvation Army Cemetery, Blackmarsh Road. Donations in his memory may be made to the I.W.K. Children's Hospital, Halifax, or the Charles A. Janeway Hospital, St. John's.

HMCS Margaree divers remembered at service

http://tridentnews.ca/Portals/0/pdfarchives/2011/feb21_2011.pdf

02-21-2011 By Virginia Beaton Trident Staff

Sailors gave their lives in service to their country.

During a quiet service in St. Brendan's Chapel on Tuesday Feb. 8, 2011, two Navy divers who lost their lives during a diving accident 20 years ago were commemorated. SLt William Cory Wells and MS William Eldon Hynes, both of HMCS Margaree, drowned while they were carrying out a hull inspection of the American ship USS Pharris. Family members, friends and colleagues of the two divers gathered to remember and honour them, and several members of Margaree's ship's company at the time of the tragedy gave readings during the service.

Cdr Lin Paddock, who was a bridge watchkeeper in 1991, read an epistle, Orville Thamer, former Executive Officer, read the gospel and former cox'n Earle Corn read the Act of Remembrance. "These were the only two Canadian casualties attributed to the Gulf War," stated George Borgal, Margaree's commanding officer at the time of the incident.

The service of remembrance for SLt Wells and MS Hynes "opens up a flood of emotions," according to Borgal, describing them as "feelings that have been submerged for 20 years." The tragedy occurred on Feb. 8, 1991, when Margaree was in the port of Funchal on the Portuguese island of Madeira, off North Africa. The ship had completed a lengthy workup of the Standing Naval Force Atlantic and as the Gulf War was imminent, NATO forces were diverted to the Strait of Gibraltar. One of the precautionary measures was a bottom search of each ship's hull and as the American navy had only surface swimmers, divers from Margaree were requested to search Pharris's hull.

Unfortunately, the divers did not know that the sea water intake for Pharris's engine cooling system had not been turned off and they were sucked into the intake. The intakes were switched off but both SLt Wells, age 27, and MS Hynes, age 31, had drowned. SLt Wells and MS Hynes died as result of "circumstances completely out of their control," said Borgal, adding "Even the best of training can't eliminate unforeseen risks."

While the time after the accident included "days of self-recrimination and guilt," Borgal noted "But I also recall the courage shown that day. Billy and Cory were two heroes, but no less so was the rest of the dive team."

In her sermon, padre Lt(N) Newhook asked "What can we say to bring sense to the seemingly senseless? What a terrible tragedy occurred. An accident, plain and simple." Lt(N) Newhook quoted from the Gospel reading that day, which included the verse "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." She reminded the congregation "No life given so that others may live, is ever given in vain. These two young men died in service to their fellow sailors and to their country."

Dawn Wells, widow of SLt Wells, spoke briefly, thanking everyone for attending and noting that though her husband was only 27 when he died, "He had a big impact on the people around him." Margaree, a St. Laurent class destroyer, was decommissioned in May 1992.

The ship's bell may be seen every morning during Colours at base headquarters in Stadacona, and it is also used on Remembrance Day and at Battle of the Atlantic services

Fallen Navy Member Honoured By St. John's Air Cadets

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/fallen-navy-member-honoured-by-air-cadets-1.3617163>

Jun 05, 2016 CBC News | Last Updated: June 6, 2016



Hynes

A cadet squadron in St. John's is celebrating the life of a former member with a brand new award. 1:13

A cadet squadron in St. John's is celebrating the life of a former member with a brand new award.

William E. Hynes died 25 years ago while serving in the navy but it wasn't until recently that the 510 Lions Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron heard about Hynes' passing.

The squadron's commanding officer, Captain Bob Turnbull, said he found out about Hynes' story on Remembrance Day last year.

"On his way to the Gulf War he was involved in a tragic accident," said Turnbull. "He and his diving officer were pulled into a seawater intake vent on a United States missile cruiser and they both drowned."

Turnbull said it was a no brainer to honour Hynes' service by creating an annual award for the 510 Lions "most dedicated cadet" in his name.



The 510 Lions Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron is remembering former cadet William E. Hynes with a memorial award named in his honour. (Katie Breen/CBC) "When we found that out we determined that this had to be rectified, that we couldn't allow his sacrifice to go unnoticed."

The award was given out on Saturday to cadet Polina Konstantinova at the annual ceremonial review for the squadron.

"I was in shock when I heard about it," said Konstantinova.

"It's such an honour to preserve his memory. I can't even describe it... it's just amazing."

Family in attendance

Deborah Hynes says it was a pleasure to present the award named after her late husband to Polina Konstantinova. (Katie Breen/CBC)

Hynes' widow Deborah Hynes, his three sons, and mother were all in attendance at the event to deliver the award to Konstantinova.

"I'm still tongue-tied," said Hynes.

"I didn't realize how much I missed the military family until this morning. It was awesome."

Hynes said her late husband would have been grateful for the award given out on Saturday.

"He would be so proud to be honoured the way he was today," she said.



With files from Katie Breen



First Hand Account and video

<https://www.longstreath.com/community/topic/8610-master-seaman-william-hynes-portugal-1991/>

The Wednesday Report

http://navydiver.ca/Documents/News/Margaree_Deaths.pdf

February 13, 1991

QUESTIONS REMAIN AFTER CANADIAN NAVY DIVERS' DEATHS

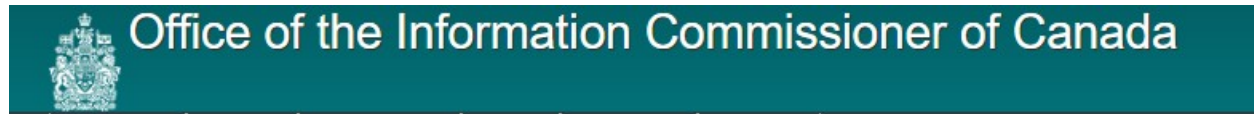
Two Canadian navy divers from HMCS Margaree drowned Friday off the Madeira Islands, Portugese territories about 250 kilometers off the coast of North Africa.

Master Seaman William Hynes, 31, of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia and Sub-Lieutenant Corey Wells, 27, of Halifax were trapped inside a seawater intake pipe used to cool the engines of USS Pharris, a Knox (Mod) class guidedmissile cruiser.

Margaree and Pharris were at the Madeira capital's port at Funchal at the time of the accident. Naval spokesmen are saying little about the incident and an investigation is under way.

Questions are being raised as to how the two divers came to be sucked into the vent. The two ships were on station with the NATO Standing Naval Force Atlantic (STANAVFLORANT) at the time. Margaree is due back in Halifax later next month.

Where there's a Will . . .



http://www.oic-ci.gc.ca/eng/inv-inv_not-inv-sum-som-inv-not_sum_1992-1993_23.aspx

When a journalist asked the Department of National Defence for reports of investigations into the February, 1991 drowning deaths of two Canadian Forces seamen an unusual problem emerged and a creative solution was found.

The tragic mishap occurred while Master Sean William Hynes and Sub-Lieutenant Corey Wells were checking the hull of an American ship docked in the Portuguese Maderia Islands far off the northwest coast of Africa. The American vessel, USS Pharris, and a Canadian vessel were part of a North Atlantic Treaty organization group exercise.

Standing NATO agreements prohibit member countries from releasing records without the permission of all nations concerned. The prompt response by the defence department to the journalist's request was to claim all information subject to a mandatory exemption in the access Act. The law requires officials to refuse to disclose anything given in confidence by a foreign state or an international organization.

As it turned out, when the journalist complained to the Information Commissioner a way was found to release information while respecting the NATO Standing Agreements and Canadian law.

The investigation quickly determined that three, not two, investigations had been held into the accident. One was ordered by the commanding officer of HMCS Margaree on which the Canadians served. Another was conducted by a NATO Combined Board of Inquiry put in place by the Atlantic Supreme Allied Commander.

The board included officers of Canadian, U.S. and Portuguese forces. The third summary investigation was ordered by the Commander of the Fifth Canadian Destroyer Squadron and carried out concurrently with the NATO inquiry. The procedure gave Canadian investigators access to USS Pharris personnel written statements and oral testimony.

When consent for release of the NATO records was not given, the investigation turned to the Canadian investigation ordered by the HMCS Margaree's commander. It was an all-Canadian inquiry. No statements had been taken or discussions held with non-Canadian members of the NATO Naval Force.

The department agreed to release the bulk of the Canadian report, minus its personal information. The commissioner's office also learned that the department had given the divers' relatives letters that summarized findings of the three inquiries and a chronology of events. The journalist was given the same information. He was grateful.

A congratulatory note arrived at the commissioner's office. "Without the Information Commissioner, some of the facts about the unfortunate deaths would have remained hidden forever," it read.

HFXCrow:

<https://milnet.ca/forums/index.php?topic=20989.15;wap2>

HMCS Margaree-Feb 8-1991- Funchal, Maderia Islands

The diving accident occurred in the Maderia Islands as HMCS Margaree was part of STANAVFLORANT.

Ships Team Divers:

Master Seaman William "Billy" HYNES (NESOP) and Sub-Lieutenant Corey WELLS were involved in the tragic accident.

HMCS Margaree was tied up along the Knox Class (USS Pharris). Diving ops were under way when Billy and Corey were sucked into the ships intakes and passed.

Corey's father used to be the CO of CFS Millcove and his brother is a PO2 comm



type.

The MS Billy Hynes Award is awarded to the Top Student of the NESOP QL6A course.

Standing Committee On National Defence And Veterans Affairs

<http://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/36-1/NDVA/meeting-60/evidence>

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA DÉFENSE NATIONALE ET DES ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

EVIDENCE - [*Recorded by Electronic Apparatus*]


Friday, May 8, 1998

The Chairman: Chief Petty Officer Earl Corn.

Chief Petty Officer Earl Corn (Individual Presentation): Mr. Bertrand, other MPs, first of all, I must apologize. I do not speak en français and so the best I can do is my mother tongue from Saskatchewan, English.

It is an honour to have the privilege to speak to you today. I'm very optimistic and have faith that you are here to listen carefully to just some of the outstanding personnel who make up Maritime Forces Atlantic, as well as to their families and friends.

It was only a short few months ago that SCNDVA was here in Halifax and chaired by Ms. Mary Clancy. That committee listened intently to many of the maritime forces families, who hoped they could see some of the many problems facing today's service family. Our personnel hoped and prayed they could truly help, but what happened next was an election, and now we have a group of new faces.

• 0835 

Let us hope this new committee will hear their voices and once again put their concerns on a track that cannot be swayed. Let us hope in a short time we will actually see results in Parliament, which will truly assist our service personnel and their families. It is imperative that this committee be totally bipartisan, as are those of Canada's military who serve you.

I have read many of the reports you have heard from across this great country and only want to expand and broaden these horizons.

First of all is care for our injured, and not just those who were injured in theatre on active duty but also those who risk their lives each and every day in carrying out their normal duties in the service of our country.

During the Gulf War, I was coxswain of HMCS *Margaree*. The ship was deploying to the sunny Caribbean to carry out NATO exercises with the Standing Naval Force Atlantic. What happened next was that we were diverted to rendezvous in Ponta

Delgada in the Azores. After a short port visit it was off to sea and work up a squadron so that the NATO Quick Reaction Force was ready to meet any contingency given. After intense work-up, we sailed into Funchal in the Madeira Islands, for what was to be a few days of well-deserved rest and recreation.

This was not to be, for at 2.45 p.m. on February 8, 1991, two of my shipmates were killed in a tragic diving accident under the hull of the American frigate USS *Pharris*. Each day I drink from a mug that was given to me by the command master chief of the USS *Pharris*. I do this to remind me of my shipmates, Sub-Lieutenant Corey Wells and Master Seaman Billy Hynes, who lost their lives in this tragic accident.

What I worry about most of all is Mrs. Debbie Hynes, as she raises three young boys on her own, with about 50% of his wage and—if there's any money left—the small supplementary death benefit paid.

In another light, what will happen to Corporal Ricard, one of our CE soldiers here, when he retires? He lost his leg in a freak accident in Petawawa in 1991.

In Maritime Forces Atlantic there is a lot of pride taken in how we look after our personnel, using all our resources and working evenings and weekends to ensure the best possible care is given to our injured, sick, and dying.

An example is the medical patients holding list. We have a commander in charge of personnel who acts as the commanding officer and the base chief petty officer acts as the divisional chief petty officer. We try to ensure in all cases there is no red tape to cut and spouses and families are not left to fend for themselves. We want to meet the needs of the entire family.

To name just a few examples: We've built wheelchair ramps and moved hospital beds to homes. We have provided assisting officers for terminally ill persons months in advance of death, ensuring that estates and everything else required are looked after. After a service person has passed away, we ensure the assisting officer keeps in touch with the family years after the death, offering his help in any way he can.

I would like to offer you, Mr. Chairman, and your committee a cup so that you perhaps will symbolically remember all the servicemen and servicewomen who put their well-being on the line each day in the service of our country.

I guess what I'm trying to say is we are different, those who put on this uniform. It's not just the uniform of a job, but the uniform of a vocation.

When there is a ship in trouble at sea, we will bounce off 40-footers in a force-10 gale to rescue its crew. We will send out a helicopter, pushing it to its very limits in the worst weather and dangle one of our SAR technicians off a skinny wire to save someone's life.

I cannot speak for the army, but you must also listen to their stories. We do these things because of our love for this country and its people, putting their welfare above that of our own. All we ask at the end of the day is that for those who are killed or injured in the line of duty, you look after them and their families. Let's not allow the cloud of bureaucracy to overshadow our judgment of what type of duty they were on when these tragic incidents happened.


STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

<https://www.noscommunes.ca/Content/Committee/361/NDVA/Evidence/EV1038696/ndvaev60-f.htm#T0835>

Friday, May 8, 1998

TESTIMONIALS

[*Electronic registration*]

• 0727 

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.)): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am pleased to welcome you this morning. I have the impression that we came back here after only two or three hours of absence.

Small practical-practical detail before you start: if you want headphones for interpretation, go get them there.

[*French*]

For those who want to express themselves in French, there is no problem. You can express yourself in the language of your choice.

[*Translation*]

As I said before, we are an all-party committee. One of our members is Mr. George Proud, Member of Parliament for Hillsborough, Prince Edward Island. He was supposed to be with us this morning, but he was held back by other commitments. Mr. Proud is parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and, believe me, he would have liked to have been here this morning.

To begin, I will ask the members opposite to introduce themselves, so that we know who they are.

[*French*]

Usually, at the beginning of the sitting, I ask all members to introduce themselves. We will start with Mr. Lebel.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Hello. My name is Ghislain Lebel and I am the member of Parliament for the riding of Chambly, on the south shore of Montreal, Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Hello. My name is David Price, I am the member of Parliament for Compton—Stanstead and I am the Defence Critic for the Conservative Party of Canada.


Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Hello. My name is Leon Benoit and I represent the riding of Lakeland, Alberta, where Cold Lake Air Force Base is located. I am a Reform MP and Deputy Defence Critic.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): My name is Art Hanger, I am the Reform Critic for Defence and I represent the riding of Calgary Northeast.

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): My name is Hector Clouthier, I am the Liberal member of Parliament representing the riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke where CFB Petawawa is located.

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): My name is David Pratt, I am the Liberal member for Nepean—Carleton, which is just outside of Ottawa.

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): My name is Wendy Lill from the New Democratic Party, and I am replacing Chris Axworthy, our defence critic. I am here today because Dartmouth is in my riding and I want to hear from my constituents.

• 0730 

The Chairman: My name is Robert Bertrand, I represent the riding of Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle in Quebec and I am the chair of this standing committee.

We will now hear from our first witness, Rear-Admiral Dusty Miller.

Rear-Admiral Dusty Miller (testifies in his personal capacity): Thank you, sir. I am very pleased to be here with you this morning to reiterate in a slightly more formal context, what I explained to you yesterday.

I will stick to my notes, a translated copy of which I gave to the interpreters, but I will switch from English to French, if you do not mind.

[French]

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to formally address you today. I intend to address three topics that I consider essential to the quality of life of our regular and reserve military personnel. These topics are pay or remuneration, housing and operational pace.

[Translation]

These three topics are: pay and remuneration, housing and operational pace.

Before I explore these topics with you, I would like to highlight the initiatives we have sponsored to help the soldiers, sailors and seagoing personnel in my Formation so that they can do as much as possible with the pay they receive. Here are examples of what we can do and what we have done in Maritime Forces Atlantic.

We have established an on-site daycare that will be primarily tailored to the needs of single-parent families and will open on June 1. With our own money, we built 25 cottages next to a lake, 90 minutes from Halifax, so that our members could spend a well-deserved vacation with their families. The price of these cottages is progressive according to the balance, so that they are as accessible as possible for all. We have made arrangements to get discounted tickets to shows and sporting events, in collaboration with our wonderful local businesses. We negotiate discounts at local merchants. We found funds to build a new gymnasium at the arsenal and a better community centre. We have made the services of the Military Family Resource Centres more accessible by establishing satellite offices throughout the region. We have created a spouse employment program through which more than 140 jobs have already been found for spouses and which is supposed to serve as a national model for the Forces.

[French]


Here in Halifax, we are committed to taking every opportunity to improve the quality of life for our people. While I am proud of what we have achieved so far, I regret to say that it is not enough. We need your help dealing with pay, housing and workload issues.

[*Translation*]

I know you have already heard a lot about pay and compensation. Indeed, it can easily be argued that, nowadays, seafarers earn much less than the fair wage rate dictated by the market for the number of hours they work, and given the conditions in which they work. For example, our sailors often have to work in confined spaces with little confidentiality, 16 hours a day, 7 days a week, at sea in the North Atlantic, unforgivable, where human error can endanger the lives of their fellow shipboards in peacetime.

When you take these things into account and the undisputed fact that our seafarers earn less than their counterparts in the public service, it is obvious that our people are not being fairly compensated for the challenges they face. This is especially true in the case of our lowest-ranking members—third-class sailors and second lieutenants—who struggle every day to raise a family on pay that allows them very little luxury.

Let us now turn to the issue of housing. The main issue regarding housing in the Halifax area is quality. I think you hear a lot about that from the sailors. The reality is such that there is very little money to renovate the old buildings on Canadian Forces bases that were built in the post-war years and in which our military lives. While some people insist that our sailors live in subsidized housing, in reality, the Treasury Board directive is that CF members pay the fair price dictated by the market for housing. Of course, this is not the case in all areas where members of the navy are stationed, as you have seen in Esquimalt, where high housing costs are the problem.

• 0735 

However, since the pay of our sailors is the same on both coasts, I believe that a method should be considered to ensure that all CF members have access to a common level of housing, regardless of where they are stationed in Canada. That is the challenge.

Of the three topics mentioned, the issue of operational rhythm is certainly on the same footing as pay and housing in terms of its impact on troop morale and how people feel about their work. It is also the most complex issue. The operational pace is based on a delicate balance. Several factors must be taken into account, i.e. time spent on operations and time spent on maintenance and repairs; the time required for the exercises and training of crews to develop their combat skills and the time required to apply those skills in the performance of the missions to which they are assigned; finally, if you have to devote some time to your country, you also need time for your family and yourself.

[*French*]

Finding this balance is essential to our operational efficiency and the morale of my sailors. However, while essential, a number of external factors continue to make this goal difficult to achieve.

[*Translation*]

The obstacle that most prevents us from achieving this balance has been the steady reduction in our workforce and budgets in recent years. In fact, over the last two years, as a result of personnel cuts, Maritime Forces Atlantic has lost 1,000 people, which is almost 10 per cent of our workforce, and \$48 million, or 25 per cent of our budget—and we are not a big navy to start with.

Perhaps we could deal with such reductions if it were not for the fact that we are, in my opinion, busier than ever. This situation results in a high level of stress in some of our members. My staff is working hard to restore that balance. For example, we will reduce the sailing time of HMCS *Toronto* when it returns—we do not yet know when—from its unplanned mission in the Persian Gulf. However, the missions that we have withdrawn in *Toronto* will now have to be assigned to other ships, which are already very busy themselves. In fact, we give with one hand what we have taken with the other.

Since taking office, I have been trying to create an atmosphere of relaxed professionalism and slow down the pace a little. But to tell the truth, ladies and gentlemen, so far I have failed. We continue to have to do more and more with less, despite some of our recent initiatives, because of the combination of increased real-world operations and budget cuts. Our vessels are always in high demand for


missions that are vital to Canada's security, whether it is operations in the Persian Gulf or off Yugoslavia with the NATO fleet, fisheries surveillance and sovereignty patrols, or operations to represent Canada from Haiti and South Africa to northern Norway. The result: longer separations for sailors from their families, more stress and the erosion of the satisfaction of being in the military.

[*French*]

In recent years, the situation on land has become the same as at sea. Previously, a shore assignment was an opportunity to escape the 16 hours of work of a stay at sea and find yourself in a more normal work environment.

[*Translation*]

Now we are asking a small number of staff to provide the same support we have traditionally offered to our ships at sea. People work longer hours—and I remind you that we do not offer overtime pay—and have the predictable negative effects on their families.

• 0740 

You gave me five minutes. Ladies and gentlemen, given the exceptional circumstances of military life, I will summarize as follows: I ask you to help us provide these dedicated military personnel with what they need most, which is a fair paycheque, access to decent and affordable housing and an operational pace that does not continue to constantly place extraordinary demands on our sailors.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Admiral.

Mr. Pratt.

Mr. David Pratt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

During our hearings, Admiral, many people from the East Coast and the West Coast came to talk to us about the various morale and quality of life issues in the Canadian Forces. In particular, they complain—and I want to make it clear that I am not speaking to you directly, and these are remarks in general—that the Canadian Forces are sinning on the command side, because the people in Ottawa have not taken a stand for the average soldier, sailor or airman. We have even

heard this from General Roméo Dallaire, who has acknowledged that on several occasions, even though he had funds in his budget, he has had to devote these sums to operational requirements rather than to improving the quality of life of soldiers and sailors.

What do you think of what General Dallaire said about the command of the Canadian Forces not doing everything possible to defend the average Canadian soldier?

Cam Dusty Miller: It is very difficult to answer this question. I think there is some truth in what General Dallaire said. I think in recent years we have been left with less money because of the restructuring of the Canadian Forces and we have had to make some very difficult decisions. For example, we have had to give priority to the missions we are called upon to carry out throughout the world. Following my philosophy of "relaxed professionalism", I would like to think that we put people first, unfortunately we cannot forget the rest. We cannot exclude all the requests that are made to us in these kinds of circumstances, particularly with regard to people. We must remember that it is the men and women who make the organization.

General Baril was very clear about this: we have to take care of our subordinates. In a way, over the last few years, we have neglected that aspect so that we can continue to function as best we can, as one of the best armies in the world—one of the lowest paid as well, by the way—to do what we do best in the service of the Canadian people, to be there in the event of a disaster, without waiting for additional remuneration. But there comes a time when we raise our heads to see that we have done our part for this country, that we have helped the government bring its deficit to zero, and that we have done it a little bit at the expense of our subordinates.


Now, through the projects I have just told you about, I am trying to rehash this spirit at all levels of the pyramid, including General Baril, so that all those who work with us assume the responsibility of our subordinates.

In the navy, we apply what is called the divisional system. As soon as an ordinary sailor embarks, he is integrated into a division. This is a very small group of people with the same specialty. The group's superior's mission is to take care of each

sailor. He himself reports to a superior who takes care of him and who helps him in his career and in his training, who assists him with his needs and aspirations.

We have overburdened our people with work for the reasons I explained to you in my presentation. We have asked a lot of several of them and when you impose a high demand on an entire system, up and down, you have to give up some things. I think we have neglected the human aspect a little too much in the last four or five years, and we need to deal with it again. We are well aware of that. We have restored absolute confidence in our command.

We have in our military, most of them, if not 99 per cent, of the best military leaders in the world, and I have sailed in over 30 navies. I know that we devalue ourselves in a certain way and that it is sometimes easier to criticize than to say that we belong to a fantastic organization. You have to put things in perspective. We are not stupid. We try to do what is best for our subordinates.

• 0745 

Mr. David Pratt: We were just given a coffee cup with the Navy coat of arms with the words "Ready, aye, ready"—Ready yes ready.

Do you not think that at some point, the head of an organization that is being asked to do the same thing, or even more with more and less resources—I am thinking here of the Chief of the Defence Staff—should say, "Enough is enough, we can no longer do what you want with the resources you give us"? Do you not think that at some point the Chief of the General Staff must be more politically wearing down and say that he can no longer continue to play the role that has been entrusted to him? For example, it is necessary to decide what will be done and what will not be done in relation to what is set out in the White Paper.

Cam Dusty Miller: I cannot answer for the chief of National Defence, but I will try to give you a couple of answers. The government is asking us to fulfil certain tasks clearly set out in the White Paper. It says that we must stand up for Canada and North America, and that together with our allies, we must do what we can, here and on the international stage, to promote Canada and all that it represents as a democratic nation. We do that very well.

I will tell you what is happening in the navy. When I set sail with the fleet, I always give a little speech to cheer up the troops and I tell my sailors that since the


Gulf War we have hit 28 brand new ships, entirely Canadian, which are beasts of computer and technology. Can we fulfill the missions entrusted to us? I will answer you: we are not only able to fill them, but we can also do it better than ever. We have here, at anchor, one of the fittest marines I have seen in my 33-year career. It is obvious that we can fulfill the missions entrusted to us. On the other hand, isn't the price to pay for this a little too high? Shouldn't we put our foot down a bit? I would say yes.

That is where I come in and try to interpret all the requests that are submitted to us to try to lift my foot a little, to make life a little easier for people, and that is what I intend to do as long as I am in this command. Won't I end up with one canoe and one sinker? You see, I really like the navy. I love the people who serve there. It is one of the best organizations I have ever known and I hope you realized that yesterday during your visit to the old submarine, when you met our sailors who are so proud of their submersible. We are delighted to have touched these kinds of submarines, even if they are a little old.

There's a very small difference between just doing what you need to do and doing it smartly. Our command is seeing how we will continue to carry out our missions, but using our resources better. That's what we're doing, for example, with these almost new submarines, which will still do the trick in 30 years. We are trying to find ways to do our job on a tight budget. But we have to be careful in the way we do it and we have to take care of the very loyal people who have been working with us for years.

We are emerging from the transition phase. The last few years have been very difficult because of the budget cuts and I would like to see that calm down. I think everything is falling into place. We will achieve this, but as you can see, there is a price to pay: in the stress and well-being of our people. In some cases, there is nothing we can do at the local level because it is a national problem.

That is why you came to see us, why you are trying to understand what is happening, listening to the sometimes very disconcerting stories that some people give you. I hope that you will be able to draw something from all this and make recommendations to improve the situation.

• 0750 

Mr. David Pratt: Thank you.

The Chairman: Mr. Hanger.

Mr. Art Hanger: Good morning, Rear Admiral. I am happy to see you here, because I was held up yesterday and was unable to take part in the small cruise. I do not know if you participated yourself, but I am glad to see you here this morning.

Let us move on to the budget. I am not sure that I have noticed the proportion of the decrease in the budget in passing. Were you saying it was a decrease of about 45 per cent?

Cam Dusty Miller: Twenty-five percent.

Mr. Art Hanger: Twenty-five percent!

Cam Dusty Miller: This reduction relates to Maritime Forces Atlantic in Halifax, more primarily base support services, maintenance services for our ships.

Mr. Art Hanger: What is the state of Maritime Forces Atlantic with respect to this 25 per cent reduction? Has the reduction been applied in whole or in part only?

Cam Dusty Miller: We still have 10 per cent to cut this year, and then it will be over.

Mr. Art Hanger: So there will be no more reduction next year?

Cam Dusty Miller: That is what is planned.

That is why I am saying that we are coming out of the transition phase, after this 25 per cent reduction. I will have to reduce my operating budget by another 10 per cent, or about \$10 million out of a total budget of \$200 million.

Mr. Art Hanger: Are you going to have to cut another \$200 million?

Cam Dusty Miller: No, the \$200 million is my operating budget in the Halifax area. I have to cut another \$10 million here and there over the next year.

We looked at it from an operational and personnel perspective, and I decided to reduce the level of activity in the fleet.

Mr. Art Hanger: Will you do less training?

Cam Dusty Miller: That's right, we'll do less training, I'll avoid getting people out.

Mr. Art Hanger: I understand that, for their training, your divers frequent an area that is not very far from here.

Cam Dusty Miller: Indeed, the diving unit of the fleet trains on the other side of the port.

Mr. Art Hanger: Will it be dissolved?

Cam Dusty Miller: Never. But I may have misunderstood your question. Want to know if we are going to keep this unit in service?

Mr. Art Hanger: I'm talking about the location.

Cam Dusty Miller: For now, the unit is based in Shearwater. Since the closure of the track there, we have two properties that we do not need and that have been put up for sale. The local municipality would like to buy it. However, the facilities of the fleet's diving unit will not be affected.

A task force is in the process of determining whether the Shearwater Pier could be used by the municipality for commercial purposes, in parallel with our current operations.

Want a specific answer on that?

Mr. Art Hanger: Yes.

Cam Dusty Miller: Want to know if the fleet's dive unit is at risk of losing its facilities? There is no danger at the moment. We are trying to determine whether it would be possible for us to coexist with commercial activities. We are still far from knowing what exactly we can do and whether we will be able to do anything.

The diving unit of the fleet uses 214 or 215 days a year these facilities, which were specially chosen because the waters are calm and there is little traffic.


Divers train there and there are very special pieces of equipment, in very good condition, some of which are secured in this area.

It would be very expensive for us to remove all this and one wonders if it would be worth the effort. I do not know and we are at this stage of the analysis.

Mr. Art Hanger: So it's not settled yet.

Cam Dusty Miller: No.

Mr. Art Hanger: My next question will be about the Canadian Forces commissary, CANEX. This is not the first time I have visited a CANEX, and the president and I have had the opportunity to visit one of the Resource Centres to see some of the awards.

• 0755 

I spoke with two or three people. Apparently, there isn't a big price difference compared to a 7-Eleven, for example. It is difficult to make comparisons for furniture, but let's say that in general, you do not have much advantage in having a CANEX on site. We saw this during the visit.

No one has ever thought of grouping all the CANEX, like the American PXs? Obviously, Americans buy goods at significantly lower prices and they have more choices.

Cam Dusty Miller: And what would you think of increasing the pay of our sailors? This is all philosophical, Mr. Hanger.

Mr. Art Hanger: You could go so far as to ask what would be wrong with giving them a whole range of tax breaks, which they really deserve.

Cam Dusty Miller: That's right. There would be nothing wrong with that. I think it's even a good idea.

Mr. Art Hanger: What I want to tell you is that all these advantages actually have advantages only the name. Either they are recovered in the form of taxes, or you pay the same as civilians everywhere else in the market and maybe even more.

I made this suggestion to you in case you were looking for benefits that might make your life a little easier. I would like to know if anyone has looked at that to determine if you could have a much more interesting system for members. Why not focus on the quantity and variety of goods?

Cam Dusty Miller: I see. There are a couple of things that need to be clarified about CANEX. It offers reasonable prices all year round for a range of goods; they have their own sales system and the profits are paid into central funds.

It is our money. It is this money that we used to build the cottages and carry out other projects. So there are hidden benefits that not everyone sees a priori.

As for the comparison with the way the Americans do business, we are dealing with a philosophical question. I will not tell you that my first reaction to your question was not casual, but it all comes down philosophically to how all Canadians are treated, whether they are military or not —

Of course, the United States is more populous than Canada. Their system is based on a vast infrastructure: where there are no department stores, where there is no police station, they build them. They have a vast organization and their bargaining power allows them to buy goods at low prices.

At the local level, I try to use our bargaining power for the 10,000 or so members who work here and who are occasionally recognized by the community. I am not saying that we take these people for acquit, but they have always been there and we can think that they always will be. Why, then, would they be given more advantages than others?

On the other hand, we are trying to make the community understand that our 10,000 people has a definite economic impact.

That's one of the reasons I went on television last week to say that we were going to host an international naval exercise in two or three months... On this occasion, we will house 25 foreign vessels in Halifax Harbour. This fiscal year will bring in \$9 million for the Halifax Regional Municipality. So I asked what the military could expect to receive in return... because, after all, we didn't have to organize that kind of exercise here.

Civilians tell us, well, maybe we'll give you a little something... Burger King will give a 15 per cent discount to all those who carry a military ID card. You know, every little thing is going to help us.

Mr. Art Hanger: No doubt.

Cam Dusty Miller: Now, for the first time, we are using an asset that we have never used in the past. If we continue to negotiate in this direction, we may get to the point where the municipalities themselves can offer us certain advantages that will allow us to do without CANEX. So we do what we can to get better prices, to save elsewhere and, ultimately, to do better overall.

But there may be a need to keep CANEX in place until we have established better conditions with local merchants.

• 0800 

Mr. Art Hanger: I have one last question.

DND has parcels of land across the country. Some are located in the middle of cities, in the heart of urban areas. I am not just talking about the navy, but you too happen to have land that could be sold to the public.

In Calgary, you have 1,000 acres right in the middle of the city; in Edmonton, there are 640 acres downtown as well, which have been put up for sale. All your properties could pay off big.

Was there any talk within DND about what we were going to do with the money from the sale of the land? Obviously, the proceeds will be paid into general revenue, but I was wondering if you had not negotiated something to have it put back into the military budget and use it to meet your needs. The military with whom I have spoken about this do not seem to have thought about it, yet you will soon be deprived of an important resource. This opportunity will only come once. When the land has been sold it will be finished and the large sums that the operation will have brought in will be paid into the general revenues. Have you been involved in any such negotiations?

Cam Dusty Miller: Not really, so I can't give you any details, but I am aware of this philosophical debate that you are talking about.

Can we expect to receive the proceeds from the sale of land and equipment declared surplus? Because it's not just about land; there is also talk of disarming a few ships, such as the one that is moored in the port at the moment, HMCS *Cormorant*, our hydrographic vessel. I asked that the proceeds of its sale be given to the navy and that would be fine if that were possible.

You are right, the money is paid into a central fund and then distributed in dribs and drabs to the various departments. Some of it goes to Defence, but in general it is centralized and the government uses it in the way that suits it. If we appear before you today, it is also to ask you to put some of that money back into the defence budget to make our lives easier.

Mr. Art Hanger: No problem, it would correct the situation on the housing side.

Cam Dusty Miller: That would be a start, but there are also many other things that need to be corrected.

Mr. Art Hanger: Certainly. Thank you.

Cam Dusty Miller: You're welcome.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mr. Benoit.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to you, Admiral.

Earlier, speaking of the budget, you expressed the hope that the situation would stabilize.

By next year, you will have to pay another 10 per cent reduction in your military budget. You will do that by reducing your operations so as not to cut your workforce, but people are asking for a salary increase, which I personally find quite reasonable. However, if you increase the balances, I do not see how you will manage not to reduce your workforce.

I would like you to tell us what you think.


Cam Dusty Miller: For this, it must be assumed that the salary increase must be borne by our department. If that is the case, you are right, we will have a choice to make, depending on the circumstances.

If you say that in order to increase the number of soldiers we will have to reduce the budget that allows us to carry out our missions around the world or reduce my operating budget, you are right! I will have to go and get that money somewhere. That is why I said earlier that we give with one right hand what we take with the other.

That is why we are asking for help from the central government, because so far all the reduction efforts have been made at the expense of our people, since we had to keep our activities operational. My superiors would certainly not appreciate it very much if I could tell them of my intention to draw from our operational budgets.

Personally, I believe that we should not reduce our workforce further, even if it would save you a lot in terms of payroll ... because I need everyone, except maybe a few, here and there. Thanks to the commissioning of new equipment that does

not require as much maintenance or repairs, it is possible to distribute the workforce differently.

• 0805 

If we are to increase people and draw on the defence budget for this, we will indeed have to be imaginative so that the benefits of an increase in balances do not turn into a big overall disadvantage.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Where could the money come from, apart from the defence budget?

Cam Dusty Miller: You may be in a better position than I am to answer.

Voices: Bravo, bravo!

Mr. Leon Benoit: Here's what I mean. The military is demanding an increase in their remuneration, and rightly so. People have come to us to ask that the wounded be better treated, including that injured personnel operating abroad receive more reasonable benefits. Others want to be better treated in terms of assignments and especially want families to be reunited. All these requests are quite legitimate. Still others came to demand better equipment, including better packages. Finally, some say they are overworked and ask that they be spared a little.

On the one hand, therefore, we are dealing with all these requests and, on the other hand, as you know, the defence budget will be reduced to \$9.3 billion next year, or 10 per cent.

Now suppose that this government changes its tune and decides to put a billion dollars back into your operations. That would change everything, because in 1992, when I first looked at the defence budget, it was \$12.5 billion. It is now \$9.3 billion. So let us assume that the government changes its mind and next February, in the next budget, it gives you an extra billion for the following year.

So, you who are responsible for the Land Forces...

Cam Dusty Miller: Maritime Forces Atlantic.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Excuse me.

Cam Dusty Miller: It doesn't matter. You are not going after the Land Forces anyway?

Mr. Leon Benoit: No, not at all.

So you who are responsible for Maritime Forces Atlantic, you will have to decide what you are going to do with that extra billion dollars. That would bring you back to this year's budget level, because after the reduction of \$9.3 billion, the addition of a billion dollars will take you a little higher than this year's level or last year's level. What would be your priorities then?

Cam Dusty Miller: You just told me that if the defence budget were increased—surprise!—to increase our people, we would find ourselves in the same situation as we are now. In other words, I will still have to reduce my operations by about 10 per cent to find the 10 per cent that I have to cut now.

However, my subordinates would be increased. It would not completely solve all the problems they came to tell you, but things would get better. What's more, as I would reduce my mission budget, people would spend less time at sea, be less stressed, and have a little more money. Overall, I think it would be better.


Mr. Leon Benoit: Of course, things could be worse, but you have not yet felt the full backlash of the budget cuts announced two years ago.

Cam Dusty Miller: It's true. We are in the last year of budget cuts.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Exactly. So, if next February your budget were increased by a billion dollars, you will have to decide to use it to increase the pay, to give better treatment to the injured, to increase pensions or to equip yourself with better equipment, including personal equipment. All of this you will have to do from the same \$9.3 billion budget. Suppose, once again, that the government changes its tune and increases it to \$10.3 billion. Where would you prioritize to lighten the workload of your subordinates?

Cam Dusty Miller: As I just told you, I would put the staff first. For example, I would like to increase the balances and improve the medical plan. I would reduce the number of missions to compensate for the 10 per cent budget reduction, so that I would impose as little stress as possible on families.

I told you that in terms of equipment, the navy is very well off. We touched 28 brand new buildings, all Canadian-built. I would like us to use it as marketing tools around the world, and I hope that is what Canadian shipyards will do, because they really have a good product to offer.

• 0810 

Mr. Leon Benoit: Do you think that with this billion-dollar addition—which would bring you back to a budget roughly equivalent to this year's—you would be able to provide significant balance increases?

Cam Dusty Miller: Things will not be worse than they are today.

I do not know if I understand correctly. I am telling you that my people need to be increased. That is my priority. If you want to give us a billion, we will take it.

Mr. Leon Benoit: You know, I have nothing to do with it; it concerns the government, which is a Liberal government. We are in opposition and I want to make that clear.

I mean that...

Cam Dusty Miller: You know, I have my whole team here.

Mr. Leon Benoit: ... even after this possible budget increase, you will find yourself at exactly the same level as today.

Cam Dusty Miller: I am trying to make you understand that this will not be the case. In my fleet, I have a large number of very proud sailors, who are very happy to do what they do. They chose the navy and they are always ready to go to sea. The picture is not as black as that. We are quibbling about a couple of things, including pay, and I just told you that this is my priority. I hope that will be your priority too.

In 1978, in England, I was the highest-paid officer of all NATO forces. The English officers were the lowest paid of all. The following year, they got a 34 per cent pay raise, and since 1978 I have been the lowest-paid officer in NATO. We have one of the best armies in the world; so tell me where the priority is.

Mr. Leon Benoit: That is absolutely what I was getting at.

The Chairman: Mrs. Lill.

Ms. Wendy Lill: Thank you very much, Admiral Miller.

I was very interested in what you said about the pay, which is the central issue.

Last night, some people told us something that really troubled me: people feel that medical care in the military is dangerous, sometimes below established standards. They find that in the army, the rights of individuals are not respected, they do not have access to their medical records and do not receive their pay regularly. This problem of balance cheques that are not paid out regularly, that do not make the right amount or that are cut at once because of a previous overpayment, is terrible.


I am trying to distinguish between your financial problems in general, which stem from the reduction of defence budgets, and systemic problems due to mentalities. Why is it that the military does not have a decent medical system that people could trust, or an effective accounting system that could allow them to collect their cheques regularly? Let me know what you think.

Cam Dusty Miller: Let's start with the medical system.

Our medical system has experienced the same budget cuts as the rest of our operations; everything has been affected: the service we provide, the kind of medical services we have to offer to our people in operation and the services we have to provide them on land.

In the navy, we have a medical assistant on board each ship and when we send a group of ships into operation, a doctor joins the flotilla. These are unique medical requirements. On land, when there are four or five hospitals in the community, you do not necessarily have to have a military hospital, but you need a place where medical staff can focus on their practice, when they are not in operation.

You know, of course, that health services across Canada have come under the microscope. Unfortunately, in the army, things are no different. We had to cut everywhere. Our main concern is to provide medical services in operation. For this, we have had to reduce our workforce in the past. We have seriously looked into the matter and wondered how to maintain a reasonable level of service, how to use local civilian hospitals and how to continue to send some of the medical personnel to sea. That is what has happened in recent years.

•0815 

We went from a situation where we provided everything... in fact, in terms of housing, we have moved from subsidized LF to housing whose rent corresponds to the market price. We went from a situation where we were offering comprehensive medical services, where patients did not have to wait, to a situation where we have to send people to the city for X-rays because we cannot afford to replace our X-ray facility.

That is the way it is, and I regret it. I do not know if we will be able to go back to the situation of the past. Times are tough across Canada for health services, and we are no exception, especially as we prioritize health services in operation.

Unfortunately, the operations distinguish us precisely from what happens in the civilian sector. A sailor who falls ill aboard a ship can end up in any hospital in the world. Normally, he is then repatriated to one of our hospitals to be followed by a doctor, but our doctors commute between the land and the sea. We do not have the same stability in health care as the average civilian living in Halifax who has always been treated by the same doctor since he was a child.

I think we need to compensate a little bit for all that. We need to ensure more stable medical services. The heads of the medical services are struggling, like all of us, to enable us to continue to carry out our missions. We are looking for other ways to provide medical services to our troops, and we are using civilian services.

This means that sometimes you have to go far enough to get the service that was once offered on the base. But that's the way it is. It is certainly not perfect, but can we hope to save money and at the same time continue to offer a reasonable specialized service? That is how it works.

In the second part of your question, I think you were referring to the pay system for our reservists. The challenge is daunting because the navy's reservists are spread across 24 divisions across the country and they come to serve three or four days at a time, some six months and some 30 days at a time.

When they are mobilized for certain missions, for example to serve on coastal defence vessels—which, it must be said, are all operated by the reserve, which is very proud of that—they are sent to sea. Their pay file, normally managed in Edmonton, remains there when they set sail for brief periods. When they return, their pay file is sent to Halifax. It is a real nightmare to administer this payroll


system in this way, under conditions that would perhaps suit the Bank of Montreal, but certainly not us.

I am not giving you an apology. I think it is the way reservists are paid that is the biggest problem or irritant for them. They would like to receive balance cheques that are accurate and arrive on time. I continue to receive letters from ship captains who tell me that their subordinates are receiving the wrong amounts and are late.

We have implemented three computer programs to try to solve this problem. Every time we've tried a different system, we've fixed part of the problem, but not all. I will tell you what we have not been able to resolve.

When it goes to sea and disconnects from the fibre-optic network connecting its on-board computer—which determines the crew's payroll and when it needs to be paid—the ship is left to fend for itself. We do not have the satellite systems, which are very expensive, that would allow us to pay the balances, for example, when the ship stops in Boston. It doesn't work that way.

What will I do about it? Well, we're going to go back to a manual pay registry system while waiting for someone to find a solution. But who? I know who; he is a person to whom we constantly repeat that the current formula does not work in our situation. Maybe it works for others, but not for some of our sailors. However, I believe that sailors and pilots, those who travel abroad, must be put first. We need to develop a system that will allow us to prioritize them. People who are on the ground can always go to the bank and solve their problem with the manager, which those we send on missions elsewhere cannot do. That is where I will try to intervene to improve the system.

• 0820 

Ms. Wendy Lill: I have another quick question.

What you told us about burger King's discounts, given the large contingent of customers coming to Halifax, caught my attention.

Why would you not take the opportunity to apply the principle of compassionate phone calls that allow couples to get in touch, no matter where the military is in the world? Couldn't you also take advantage of your buying power to lower the prices of Sprint or MT&T? You could negotiate a phone card, at a rate of 10c. per minute. Can't do that? Have you thought about it?

Cam Dusty Miller: Not only can we do it, but we are already doing it. We must... I don't know if you have to be careful... No, we don't have to be careful.

I met the families of *Toronto* sailors during the Gulf War. Things have changed since our sailors were in the Gulf in 1990 and 1991. You know, it's very expensive to call there. People were entitled to 15 minutes of free calls per month, which is not much. Military wives told me that I had to go through an overseas operator who did not speak English, who established the link with France and then relayed with the Gulf... No sooner had they had time to say hello to each other than the 15 minutes were over.

Phone bills were \$800 per month. That's a lot for people who don't earn as much as I'd like to start with.

What have we done? Well, we turned to MT&T. We are trying to shame the competition to offer discounts to the military, because you are right, there are 10,000 to 12,000 of them here, many of whom will be serving at sea, which should allow us to get better prices.

Something has changed since that time: we now have an e-mail system on board ships that did not exist five or six years ago. *Toronto* returned 12,000 emails. In fact, I will have to impose rules on this, because some send 20-page letters, which is very expensive for us, since communications are provided by satellite.

We will ask people to limit themselves to letters of two or three paragraphs, as long as the operational programme allows us to do so. We must also be concerned about the tasks to be fulfilled.

I find that families have never been in more contact with the military than they are in our time. During World War II, people received a letter every three months and this is the only contact women had with their husbands. Now it's instantaneous and in case of an emergency, communication is of course established right away. All the ship's commanding officer is pick up the phone and call me, wherever he is in the world, so we can solve all the problems. So, I guess all emergencies can be treated like this.

Of course, we must be able to give families the opportunity to talk to each other for more than 15 minutes, but it is a personal choice that must be left to the military. It is up to them to decide how long they want to talk to their family when they are on

an outdoor mission. Of course, they must be given the opportunity to communicate with their families. We try to make this possibility as cheap as possible with MT&T, Sprint or other telephone companies.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Ms. Lill.


Mr. Price.

Mr. David Price: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for coming to meet with us this morning, Admiral Miller. It is very important that a senior officer like you is here. We have not heard enough senior officers, like you, speaking to their subordinates. It shows how close you are to your men and that's very important.

I think you have answered most of the questions I wanted to ask you, but let us go back to the balance, which, as you said, is your main concern. The three themes you mentioned at the beginning were pay, housing and operational pace. Do you give them a relative importance corresponding to the order in which I quoted them? These are probably your three main themes, but are they personal to you or is it a feeling shared by all members of the hierarchy?

Cam Dusty Miller: I think that's a feeling that you find at all levels of the hierarchy, and that's the feeling I have, too. I am speaking on my own behalf, but I also feel perfectly comfortable leading a navy that, as I was telling you, is equipped with high-tech equipment and where we work intelligently. You have to be careful how you look at it.

• 0825 

Personally, I feel that people are not paid enough for the work they do. They are working harder than ever. It's a double-edged sword, because a ship at sea... When I meet them at sea, I usually find that their morale is good. They are focused on what they do during the mission, they do what they love to do and their family is far away. It is when the two mix that we arrive at volatile situations. When they are docked for too long, their morale takes a hit. As long as you're on a boat, they tell themselves, you might as well be at sea.

We are a one-of-a-kind weapon. We are a weapon where service is very demanding. Payroll is one of them. When sailors come home, they want to spend

time at home, they want to spend quality time with their families. So, we must admit that it is necessary to improve this quality time. They have the right to quality weather and they have the right to pleasant, reasonable accommodation.

It is therefore in the third place that I will be interested in operations. I told you about the *Toronto* that was sent on a mission at the last minute. During the first intervention in the Gulf, it took us 10 days to arm nine old ships so that they could fulfill the mission. The government told us: We have to send a ship to the Persian Gulf, and that is why I ordered *Toronto* to leave Portugal and go south, rather than north. The ship was wonderfully equipped and all we had to do was give additional training to the crew in nuclear, biological and chemical warfare. We also had to send him the appropriate protective equipment to cross in these waters. That's how it happened. In the navy, there is a big difference between what we can do and what we cannot do.

When I learned that the *Toronto* was to be deployed for about 10 months, I asked, "Who ordered this? How can we ask people to spend 10 months at sea?" Since people were at risk of being separated from their families for such a long time, I reduced it to 8 months.

Mr. David Price: You're in a very interesting situation, do you know? In a sense, we are a lobby group with the government. You too are in this position.

General Baril was very clear in saying that he did not want us to take the left hand to give from the right. Obviously, we are going to have to look for supplementary estimates, which is what Mr. Hanger and Mr. Benoit talked about earlier.

Reference has also been made to the land you own. The proceeds of their sale is another possibility that should be considered.

I appreciate that... I expect you to give me a hand by approaching your hierarchy on your side, as you have just done with us today. Thank you for coming.

Cam Dusty Miller: I hope you will find the money from Canadians.

[*French*]

Le président: Monsieur Lebel.


M. Ghislain Lebel: Contre-amiral, j'ai bien apprécié votre déposition. Les membres de ce comité seront appelés à discuter entre eux et à trouver des solutions

aux problèmes qui affligent actuellement les forces militaires. À mon avis, le principal problème est le sous-paiement. Je voudrais vous dire, et ce n'est pas une question mais plutôt un commentaire, qu'il y a des suggestions qui sont apportées à ce comité. On parlait de vendre des actifs et de garder l'argent à l'intérieur des forces. Je suis pour cela, moi aussi, mais il y a loin du désir au plaisir, comme on le sait.

On parle de réduction, d'allègements fiscaux, de choses qu'on obtient *duty free* et d'une foule de choses qui, à mon avis, semblent des privilèges. Je vous fais part de ma position devant le comité. Je crois que le problème actuel des forces tient au fait que, pendant plusieurs années, elles ont été sous-payées tout en jouissant d'une foule de privilèges...

Cam Dusty Miller: Oui, c'est cela.

M. Ghislain Lebel: ...qui faisaient que l'ensemble se présentait bien. Cependant, au fur et à mesure qu'on enlevait les privilèges, on se retrouvait devant une triste réalité. On était mal payé. Si le comité recommande qu'on accorde aux forces davantage de privilèges mais non une hausse substantielle de salaire, au gré des gouvernements qui vont suivre et de la pression des journalistes, on va obtenir encore une fois des privilèges qui deviendront illusoires dans la paie du militaire.

• 0830 

Donc, ma recommandation personnelle sera qu'on ne mette pas l'accent sur les privilèges, sur ce qu'on peut obtenir *duty free*, sur le CANEX. On reconnaît qu'on a une armée de qualité et qu'on doit dorénavant payer ses membres comme des professionnels de qualité. Donc, c'est la recommandation que j'entends faire à ce comité. Si on arrive à établir quand même quelques privilèges, parce que c'est une négociation et qu'il y aura une contrepartie, eh bien, ce sera tant mieux pour l'armée, mais il serait dévastateur que la rétribution soit basée sur des privilèges et non sur des droits. C'est ce que je voulais vous dire.

Cam Dusty Miller: Actuellement, il y a encore moins de privilèges dans les Forces armées canadiennes et moins de salaire. C'est là qu'est le problème.

[Traduction]

Je vais poursuivre dans l'autre langue. Vous avez tout à fait raison, monsieur, nous sommes en train de perdre les privilèges dont vous avez entendu parler et qui ne sont pas visibles. On n'en entend pas toujours parler.

En revanche, on peut modifier le niveau de solde. Les privilèges se sont érodés avec le temps; par exemple, nous n'avons plus de logements subventionnés. Au CANEX, les prix ne sont plus la moitié de ce qu'ils sont en ville. Nous n'avons plus de cigarettes hors taxe. Ce genre de chose a évolué, comme notre société, car ce genre de privilèges est un phénomène de société.

Les avantages que nous retirons de notre pouvoir de négociation dans la région de Halifax-Dartmouth, comme dans toutes les autres bases d'ailleurs au Canada, ne sont valables que tant qu'on en a besoin. Ces avantages nous seront offerts au coup par coup, tant que les civils estimeront que le personnel de la base est mal payé.

Le défi qui vous incombe, à l'échelle nationale, est de parvenir à augmenter les soldes du personnel. Telle doit être notre priorité et cela, je vous le dis en ma qualité de commandant de cette base. Nous allons chercher, à l'échelle locale, à obtenir quelques privilèges pour améliorer l'ordinaire de ceux et celles qui travaillent pour nous un peu partout au Canada.

[*Français*]

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Lebel.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Admiral.

Before you left, during the exchanges earlier, you said that the defence budget would be cut by 10 per cent next year. I want to make sure I understand that and that we are all on the same page.

Cam Dusty Miller: That's not it.

The Chairman: I want to make it clear that next year the defence budget will increase. For this year, in 1998, it is \$9.3827 billion, and for next year, in 1999, it will be \$9.7407 billion. The increase is approximately \$370 million. I just wanted to make sure everyone has that information.

Cam Dusty Miller: Thank you. I myself have confused my personal budget with the national budget...

The Chairman: I see. Thank you very much.

[*French*]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: Mr. Chairman, is this increase not due to the fact that we are buying submarines? Is this not assigned to the equipment?

The Chairman: No.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: All right. We will check.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Cam Dusty Miller: Thank you very much.


[*Translation*]

The Chairman: We have First Petty Officer First Class Earl Corn.

Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Earl Corn (testifies in his personal capacity): Mr. Chairman, members of the House, I must apologize because I do not speak French and I just know how to speak in my mother tongue of Saskatchewan, English.

I feel honoured to be able to address you today. I am very optimistic and I have no doubt that you have come here to listen very carefully to some of the members of maritime forces Atlantic, as well as their families and friends.

Just a few months ago, the CPDNAC, chaired by Mrs. Mary Clancy, visited us in Halifax. This committee listened to what many military families serving in the navy had to say, people who hoped that this committee would take note of the many problems faced by military families. Our staff really hoped that this visit would improve their lot, but as an election followed right away, we now find ourselves in front of new faces.

• 0835 

Let us hope that this new committee will hear the voices of those who testify before it and that their concerns will not be diverted. Let us hope that, in a short time, Parliament will act to truly help the military and their families. It is

imperative that this committee be completely neutral, like the military who serve you.

I have read most of the testimony that you have heard throughout our great country, and I propose to take up the content and go a little further.

First, there is the problem of those who are injured, not only in the theatre of operations, but who risk their lives on a daily basis to perform their normal tasks.

During the Gulf War, I was a boat owner aboard HMCS *Margaree*. We were on our way to the Sun of the West Indies to join NATO maneuvers of Standing Naval Force Atlantic. That's when we were diverted to Ponta Delgada, in the Azores. After a brief stopover, we set sail again to join a NATO Rapid Reaction Squadron to deal with any eventuality. After intensive work, we set sail for Funchal, on the island of Madeira, for what was supposed to be a few days of rest and relaxation.

But this was not the case, because at 2:45 p.m. on February 8, 1991, two of my shipmates died in a tragic accident while working under the hull of the American frigate USS *Pharris*. Every day, I drink from a cup offered to me by the *Command Master Chief of Pharris*. I do so in memory of my comrades: Second Lieutenant Corey Wells and Master Seaman Billy Hynes, who lost their lives in this tragic accident.

What worries me most is the fate of Ms. Debbie Hynes who has to raise her three young sons on half pay and—if there is a little money left—on an additional death benefit.

On the other hand, what will happen to Corporal Ricard, one of our GC soldiers, when he retires? He lost his leg in a horrific accident in Petawawa in 1991.

In Maritime Forces Atlantic, we take great pride in the way we take care of our personnel, the way we mobilize all our resources, the way we put all our evenings and weekends to ensure that our wounded, sick and dying receive the best possible attention.

For example, there is a waiting list of patients. We have a commander who is responsible for personnel and who acts as the commanding officer, and the chief petty officer of the base who acts as chief petty officer first class of the division. We are trying to ensure that paperwork does not get in the middle of the way and

that spouses and families do not have to struggle alone on their own. We want to meet the needs of the whole family.


Let me give you a few examples: We have built wheelchair ramps and had hospital beds installed in homes for the wounded and sick. We sent designated officers to terminally ill patients, several months before the death, to take care of the estate and the rest. After the death of one of our comrades, we ensure that the designated officer remains in contact with the family for several years and assists them as needed.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I would like to give you a cup symbolizing the memory of all the members of the military who sacrifice their well-being in the service of our country on a daily basis.

My point is that those who wear this uniform are different people. This uniform is not a simple work outfit, it is a froc in the full sense of the word.

When a ship is in trouble at sea, we face 40-foot blades in force-10 gusts of wind to rescue the crew. We send a helicopter that we push to the limit of its capabilities, in horrible weather conditions, to winch one of our SAR technicians at the end of a frail cable.

Since I can't speak for the foot soldiers, you'll have to hear the stories they have to tell you. We do all this because we love our country and our compatriots and we place their well-being above ours. All we are asking for, at the end of the day, is that we take care of the injured and their families, as well as the families of the deceased. Let us not allow the bureaucratic fog to fog our judgment and ask ourselves what kind of functions these soldiers, wounded or dead, were performing at the time of their accident.

• 0840 

Finally, I'm going to dwell a little on the pay, although you've already heard a lot about it. With approximately 100,000 regular civilian employees and reservists, we are one of the largest employers in Canada. You owe it to yourself to pay all our soldiers, from the smallest soldier and sailor to our generals and admirals, reasonable pay for the work they do.

We are well aware that our country is in great difficulty because of the large deficit accumulated over the years. In the military, we have done our part by bringing the situation down to a reasonable level in two ways: first, by reducing our annual budget from \$12 billion to \$9 billion, by freezing our balances and reducing our workforce. Our military leaders have taken up this challenge, have submitted new and innovative ideas, such as buying back accumulated leave to help the military make ends meet. It is interesting to note, by the way, that at the bottom of the ladder all junior officers and non-commissioned officers have asked to be paid for their unused leave.

In addition, we have been adjusted for benchmarks—I am sure you are aware of that—related to what is being done in the public service. Many in the military estimate that it has cost them thousands of dollars over the years. We believe that Treasury Board should pay for discrepancies in identification at benchmarks. This must be done right away, not in three or four years, and the difference should immediately be added to the balance.

I know that Canadians are proud of their military, especially since the floods in Manitoba and the ice storm in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.

I will tell you a story that highlights the difference between how the military perceives their vocation and how civilian personnel conceive of their work. In front of the house where I live, here, lives a young man and his family. He works for Nova Scotia Power. During the ice storm, he went to work in Maine. During the 18 days he spent there, he received more than \$13,000 in overtime and some of his classmates who went to work in Quebec and Ontario made just as much money as he did. Upon his return, he took his wife to Venezuela for a week's vacation.

On the same street lives an army corporal who worked for about 17 days in Quebec. He received his normal pay plus a large daily allowance of \$12.35. You know what happened when he got home? Well, he was given five days of special leave. He didn't take a vacation during that time. He stayed at home.

You could always tell me that this corporal was paid to do the work he was given, because that is the career he chose, but is that fair? The majority of civilians with whom I have spoken about this believe, as do I do, that it is not fair.

Earlier, I talked about pay. It would have been fantastic if the CEO had from my box, the Chief of the General Staff tells us: You will find an additional \$1,000 in your envelope as a reward for the outstanding work you have done to help the citizens of this country.

I could give you many more examples of what should be done to help our military and their families, but I think I have said enough. Now is the time to take action and I am counting on you to do that.

I will conclude by quoting a famous Canadian poet, Major John McCrae:

Go fight our enemy: our frail arm

hands you the torch, it's up to you to carry it out loud!

Thank
you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Benoit.


Mr. Leon Benoit: Thank you very much for your presentation, Chief Petty Officer. I was pleased to note that you attach great importance to the treatment of the wounded and the families of those who fall on official duty. Of course, we have heard about this issue many times during our hearings.

You were talking about the redemption of accumulated leave. Is that how it goes?

Pm 1 Earl Corn: Actually.

Mr. Leon Benoit: When did this happen and what should we conclude from it?

Pm 1 Earl Corn: We have had the opportunity to do that three or four times, thanks to savings in the ADM budget or in the overall army budget... At the end of the year, people who had not exhausted all their leave were offered... You may not know that at the beginning of your career, the leave credit is 20 days a year, and the fifth year it increases to 25 days.

• 0845 

Under the old system, since people could not take all their permissions, they accumulated their days off. The policy has been changed and now the leave credit must be exhausted each year, to the extent possible. Only in particular operational circumstances can they be accumulated.

Just recently, we were offered to buy them again. Those who want to take advantage of this option will receive their money on the last pay of the month of May. This will be the case for most junior officers and non-commissioned officers, as well as men and corporals, because they have not been in the army long enough to have taken advantage of this option before—because they did not actually have surplus credits—or, for the oldest of them, because they will have avaiated themselves of it the first time...

Mr. Leon Benoit: So we are talking about the leave accumulated before the adoption of the policy that now requires you to take it year after year...

Pm 1 Earl Corn: Except in case of operational needs, sir. Unless we have to go into operation or something else has been changed and we can't take our time off. In addition, the maximum cumulative is 25 days.

Mr. Leon Benoit: I'm trying to find out how many days off... if I am not mistaken, infantrymen are required to exhaust their days off within the year.

Pm 1 Earl Corn: This is the new leave policy. We try to apply it as best we can. It has certain advantages. I have been wearing this uniform for 33 years and have only been able to take three weeks off in a row twice. It's probably the best thing that's ever happened to me. On both occasions, I really had the chance to relax. It was an extra that I gave myself, because under the old system, I only had a week or ten days of vacation and, under these conditions, no sooner do we start relaxing towards the end of the holidays than we are already concerned about returning to work.

But this possibility is not guaranteed to all soldiers, sailors and airmen. We try to do everything in our power to allow them to enjoy it.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Tell me, is this leave buyback program expensive? Is...

Pm 1 Earl Corn: It depends on the number of days to be reimbursed to each... Some have only 9 days to get a refund and others have up to 30 days. Last year, we automatically lost what had not been taken. This year, regardless of whether you have accumulated 20, 30 or 50 days, even 150 days of leave, you can get them reimbursed. Not everyone avails themselves of this refund. Some want to keep this accumulation of leave for later, to take it eventually before retiring or to leave the service a little earlier.

M. Leon Benoit: Très bien. Merci.

Le président: Merci, premier maître. Merci beaucoup aussi pour les tasses.

Adjudant Jim McCluskey.

Cam Dusty Miller: Monsieur le président, je dois partir. Mieux vaut que je vous laisse seul pour parler avec les gens qui sont derrière moi. Merci beaucoup de m'avoir accueilli.

Le président: Très bien. Merci.


L'adjudant Jim McCluskey (témoigne à titre personnel): Bonjour, je m'appelle Jim McCluskey et je suis ici pour représenter les techniciens SAR. Je vais aborder deux points dans ma présentation: la révision de la solde et la prime de spécialiste de la recherche et du sauvetage.

La catégorie militaire de technicien en recherche et sauvetage est tout à fait unique et elle correspond à l'un des emplois les plus exigeants et les plus dangereux au monde. Les techniciens en recherche et sauvetage, couramment appelés techniciens SAR, se retrouvent souvent dans des situations d'urgence vitale. La capacité de prendre rapidement des décisions complexes est une dimension essentielle de notre travail, et cela pour assurer à la fois la sécurité des victimes au sol et celle des techniciens SAR. Les techniciens SAR évoluent dans un milieu particulièrement hostile, caractéristique des incidences sur lesquels ils sont appelés à intervenir, souvent par gros temps. On s'attend ainsi à ce que les techniciens SAR interviennent dans les conditions les plus défavorables qui soient. C'est ainsi qu'ils sont appelés à sauter en parachute, à pratiquer la survie en milieu sauvage, à plonger, à conduire des opérations de sauvetage en montagne, à faire de l'hélicoptère et à apporter des soins en secourisme avancé.

À l'heure où l'on est soumis à l'inflation et au gel des salaires, à l'heure où le coût de la vie et les impôts augmentent, il est temps de revoir la solde des techniciens SAR. Étant donné les risques considérables qu'ils sont appelés à prendre pour remplir leur mission et l'importance financière que le gouvernement accorde aux services qu'ils rendent, nous espérons que les techniciens SAR percevront une solde et une prime de risque qui soient en rapport avec leurs fonctions et avec les risques qu'ils courent.

Je vous ai remis un document qui fait ressortir l'écart entre les risques considérables que prennent les techniciens SAR et la valeur financière que cela représente. Loin de moi l'idée de jouer aux mercenaires. Il se trouve simplement qu'à cause de la situation économique actuelle, et du blocage des salaires dans le passé, la qualité de vie des techniciens SAR a souffert.

Pour mieux vous communiquer et mieux vous faire comprendre nos préoccupations, le document en question s'attarde sur deux aspects. D'abord, il place le salaire des techniciens SAR dans le contexte de leur milieu de travail; deuxièmement, il analyse la question de la prime de spécialité. Le document fait ressortir que l'actuel salaire des techniciens SAR est insuffisant. Nous espérons que leur catégorie de solde ainsi que leurs primes seront revues après une étude soigneuse de ce document.

• 0850 

La solde des techniciens SAR se compose de la solde normale des Forces canadiennes accordée à un spécialiste de niveau un, à laquelle s'ajoute une prime de spécialiste en recherche et sauvetage. Les deux, ensemble, constituent la rémunération des techniciens SAR. La partie prime n'ouvre pas droit à pension.

Les techniciens en recherche et sauvetage offrent aux Forces canadiennes ainsi qu'à la population canadienne un service de recherche et de sauvetage très spécialisé. Ils possèdent en effet les connaissances, les compétences, le professionnalisme et le courage nécessaires pour s'acquitter de cette mission unique au nom du Canada. Aucun autre service au Canada n'est apte à fournir un personnel formé dans un aussi large éventail de compétences. Dans bien d'autres pays, il faut mobiliser plusieurs organismes pour remplir les missions de sauvetage.

Au Canada, le gouvernement reconnaît le haut degré de compétence des techniciens SAR et il les autorise à remplir leur mission dans des conditions météorologiques souvent très défavorables. À partir de différents types d'aéronefs, les techniciens SAR interviennent auprès de patients à qui ils prodiguent des soins essentiels à la survie. Tout le monde—le gouvernement, la profession médicale, les Forces canadiennes et la population civile—reconnaît et apprécie les compétences des techniciens en recherche et sauvetage ainsi que la valeur de leurs interventions sur le plan des relations publiques.

Les techniciens SAR travaillent à la limite de leurs capacités physique, mentale et émotive pour exercer leur métier avec la maturité et le professionnalisme qui font leur réputation. Ils effectuent des missions, par les airs et par la mer, dont l'objet est de porter secours à des personnes en détresse. Ils apportent des soins salutaires et des soins provisoires qui se sont considérablement améliorés au cours de la dernière décennie. Les techniciens SAR préparent les blessés et les extirpent ensuite de leur mauvaise posture pour les évacuer par la mer, par les airs ou par la route. Ils secourent des gens dans toutes les conditions climatiques, exigeant toutes sortes de formations. Ils effectuent des missions dans l'Arctique, dans les océans, dans des montagnes escarpées et dans des champs de glace. Toutes ces missions de sauvetage prennent place dans les pires conditions imaginables, tant sur le plan du climat que sur celui du terrain.

Les escadrons de recherche et de sauvetage répondent à des centaines d'appels chaque année. La majorité de ces missions font appel à l'utilisation de parachutes planants, à l'hélicoptère, à l'utilisation de lunettes de vision nocturne et toutes exigent une parfaite santé, conforme à certaines normes médicales.

Le technicien en recherche et sauvetage d'aujourd'hui est hautement spécialisé dans tout un éventail d'interventions post-traumatiques. Il transporte avec lui le matériel permettant de contrôler le rythme cardiaque du patient, son pouls, les taux sanguins, la teneur du sang en oxygène, etc. En outre, il est appelé à dispenser des traitements de pointe permettant de maintenir le patient en vie et d'éviter qu'il ne souffre.

Quand il n'est pas dans les airs, le technicien SAR doit assurer l'entretien de premier et de deuxième échelon de son équipement, ce qui exige temps et formation. À cause des compressions budgétaires et des réductions d'effectifs de la

Défense nationale, les techniciens SAR doivent maintenant se livrer à des prévisions budgétaires portant sur les ressources, les missions, la formation et l'entretien.

En outre, les techniciens de recherche et de sauvetage doivent maintenir 24 types de compétence en vol. C'est le seul métier ou la seule classification en aéronautique exigeant une qualification sur voilure fixe et sur voilure tournante.

De nos jours, les techniciens SAR remplissent plus de fonctions administratives que jamais auparavant. À cause des réductions d'effectif des dernières années, les techniciens SAR sont devenus des administrateurs financiers et des spécialistes de l'approvisionnement. Les fonctions qui, avant, étaient remplies par des commis de section, des agents d'approvisionnement de l'escadre et des commis aux services financiers, incombent à présent aux techniciens SAR.


Le personnel doit suivre des cours dans l'art du commandement, des cours de retitularisation médicale et des cours de perfectionnement professionnel. Pour faire tout cela, en plus de nos fonctions normales, nous devons porter plusieurs casquettes et faire de nombreuses heures supplémentaires. Nous sommes certains, dans notre profession, de passer un maximum de temps loin de chez nous. Cela ne va pas sans imposer un stress supplémentaire sur les techniciens SAR et sur leur famille, ni sans leur créer un surcroît de problèmes.

Il est établi que la CEM de technicien SAR est l'une des fonctions les plus particulières, les plus exigeantes et les plus stimulantes qui soit. C'est un métier hautement spécialisé exigeant une formation poussée et le respect de normes strictes. Si l'on ne peut effectivement pas placer de valeur sur la vie humaine, il n'en demeure pas moins que les techniciens SAR doivent pouvoir bénéficier d'une qualité de vie raisonnable pour garder le moral et vivre dans la dignité.

Mon deuxième thème de discussion sera la prime de spécialité. La liste que vous avez sous les yeux présente l'écart entre la prime de spécialiste des techniciens SAR et celles du personnel navigant, des parachutistes et des plongeurs. Plusieurs fois par semaine, les techniciens en recherche et sauvetage risquent leur vie pour porter secours à des Canadiens et à des ressortissants étrangers. Les techniciens SAR sont sur le pied de guerre 24 heures sur 24, 365 jours sur 365. Pour chaque mission qui fait les grands titres nationaux, on compte des centaines d'opérations qui passent inaperçues même si elles sont tout aussi dangereuses.

Comme je vous le disais, un technicien SAR est un parachutiste, un spécialiste de la survie, un plongeur, un secouriste en montagne et un spécialiste du secourisme avancé. L'index B, qui se trouve dans le livre que je vous ai remis, dresse la liste des primes de sauvetage perçues en 12 années de service. Je n'ai fait cela qu'à titre comparatif. Si l'on ajoute la prime de personnel navigant, celle de parachutiste et celle de plongeur, on arrive à plus de 700 \$. La prime de spécialiste du sauvetage est de 439 \$; pourtant les techniciens SAR doivent remplir toutes les missions donnant droit aux autres primes. De plus, ils sont quotidiennement confrontés aux périls associés à l'escalade en montagne, à l'hélicoptère et au contact éventuel avec des maladies contagieuses.

Compte tenu de ces incohérences relativement à la prime de spécialiste de sauvetage, nous espérons que votre comité recommandera la révision de la prime actuelle. Bien que la qualité de la vie ne se ramène pas uniquement à une question d'argent, l'indépendance financière n'en demeure pas moins importante pour les techniciens SAR et leur famille.

• 0855 

En conclusion, je dirais que ce document aborde à peine le problème que vivent les techniciens en recherche et sauvetage et le genre de missions qui leur sont confiées.

Votre comité possède déjà une bonne compréhension du genre de service que les techniciens SAR apportent à la population canadienne. Le professionnalisme et l'éthique des techniciens SAR sont sans égal. Aucun autre service dans le monde n'envoie des hommes dans l'Arctique, en plein orage, pour affronter à la nage des creux de 20 mètres; aucun service ne parachute des sauveteurs dans des forêts denses ou dans des eaux océaniques glacées, ou en pleine montagne pour porter secours à d'autres.

Voilà donc les missions que les techniciens en recherche et sauvetage doivent accomplir avec courage et discipline. Nous avons établi le caractère tout à fait unique de la profession de technicien SAR. Cela étant posé, nous aimerions être promus à la catégorie salariale de spécialiste de niveau II et percevoir une prime de sauvetage équivalente au total des primes de personnel navigant, de parachutiste et de plongeur.

Afin de bien comprendre et d'apprécier la fonction de technicien SAR, les membres de votre comité sont invités à examiner également les annexes A, B et C qui sont un témoignage rendu au professionnalisme, au courage et au sens du sacrifice dont les techniciens en recherche et sauvetage font preuve tous les jours. Ces annexes renferment des marques d'appréciation du Premier ministre, du gouverneur général, du ministre de la Défense nationale et de celui qui était le chef d'État-major par intérim de la Défense nationale au moment où la lettre en question a été signée.

Si votre comité devait leur consentir la révision de solde ou l'étude qu'ils réclament, les techniciens SAR aimeraient beaucoup avoir la possibilité de se faire représenter dans ces discussions afin que le gouvernement comprenne mieux les demandes que nous formulons.

La qualité de la vie est importante pour les Forces canadiennes et les techniciens en recherche et sauvetage ne font pas exception. Il ne faut surtout pas oublier que les techniciens SAR sont des membres des Forces canadiennes qui entretiennent des espoirs, des rêves, qui ont pris des engagements et qui ont des familles méritant d'être récompensées pour le dévouement et l'engagement dont ils font preuves.

Merci.

Le président: Merci pour votre exposé.

Monsieur Pratt.

M. David Pratt: Merci, monsieur le président.

Monsieur le président, l'adjudant McCluskey m'a remis le livre sur la révision des soldes que je vais remettre tout de suite au greffier. Avant le début de la réunion, l'adjudant McCluskey m'a dit que plusieurs de ses camarades allaient être décorés. D'ailleurs, je ne sais pas s'ils l'ont déjà été ou s'ils sont sur le point de l'être, mais quoi qu'il en soit, il pourrait peut-être nous faire part de cette information lui-même.

Adj Jim McCluskey: Quatre d'entre nous viennent d'apprendre qu'ils allaient être décorés. Deux vont recevoir l'Étoile du courage pour leur acte héroïque accompli à 300 milles des côtes. Un yacht était tombé en panne de gouvernail en plein milieu d'un violent orage; l'équipage a déclenché son EPIRB et a appelé à l'aide. Nous avons répondu à son appel et deux d'entre nous se sont fait hélitreuiller sur le point

pour remonter les passagers. Comme ce yacht était d'un modèle ancien, le mat principal était arrimé aux bordages par des gréements qui ont empêché les sauveteurs de se faire déposer sur le pont. Il leur a donc fallu récupérer les naufragés sur les gréements mêmes.

Ils sont parvenus à en remonter deux en s'y prenant ainsi, pas sans s'être cogné eux-mêmes à droite et à gauche. Après avoir été emportée par une lame, une personne s'était raccrochée au bastingage et l'équipage ainsi que les techniciens SAR ont dû batailler ferme pour parvenir à la hisser à bord de l'hélicoptère. Le quatrième membre d'équipage était tombé par-dessus bord. Il a fallu plusieurs tentatives pour lui porter secours, car les creux étaient très profonds.

Deux autres de mes camarades vont recevoir la Croix de la Vaillance. Pour ceux qui ne le sauraient pas, cette croix est la plus importante décoration accordée au Canada en temps de paix. Elle sera donc remise à deux techniciens SAR pour leurs actes héroïques dans la Mer du Labrador, en décembre 1996, encore une fois en plein milieu d'une violente tempête. Leur mission consistait à sauter dans l'eau, à se faire ramasser par un canot et à embarquer à bord d'un grand porte-conteneurs parce qu'un membre de l'équipage était mourant. Ils devaient donc lui apporter toute l'aide médicale dont ils étaient capables.

Quand ils sont arrivés au-dessus de la zone, il faisait nuit, la tempête faisait rage, les creux étaient profonds, le vent était fort et il faisait très froid. Les deux membres de la SAR ont décidé de sauter tout de même—ils étaient près du Cercle arctique—et au moment où le canot les a récupérés, ils étaient couverts de glace. Ils sont ensuite restés à bord du navire une journée et demie et sont parvenus à sauver la vie du patient, qui souffrait d'une importante déshydratation. Les autres membres d'équipage ont déclaré que si les techniciens SAR n'avaient pas sauté cette nuit-là, le malade n'aurait pas survécu.

• 0900 

Il y a aussi le revers de la médaille. Il y a deux jours, un de nos camarades à Trenton s'est cassé les deux chevilles en sautant en parachute. Pendant six heures, ce jour-là, on s'est demandé si l'on ne devait pas l'amputer. Il est sans doute perdu pour la profession. Donc, comme vous le voyez, il y a bien sûr les côtés positifs, mais il y a aussi des côtés négatifs.

M. David Pratt: Adjudant McCluskey, pouvez-vous indiquer au comité le salaire de départ d'un technicien SAR, c'est-à-dire au moment où il embrasse ce métier?

Adj Jim McCluskey: Le salaire d'un technicien SAR oscille entre 40 000 et 44 000 \$. Cette rémunération est composée de la solde correspondant à la catégorie militaire, à laquelle vient s'ajouter la prime de spécialité et une prime de risque qui représente 400 \$ pour quelqu'un ayant 12 ans de service. Pour les plus jeunes, c'est beaucoup moins.

M. David Pratt: Étant donné les conditions dans lesquelles vous travaillez, êtes-vous tenus de maintenir une forme physique meilleure que celle des autres militaires?

Adj Jim McCluskey: Oui. À cause du travail que nous faisons, il nous arrive souvent de nous heurter violemment contre les francs-bords des navires, de nous réceptionner durement après un saut en parachute, d'atterrir dans des arbres ou dans des champs de glace. Il faut être en parfaite condition physique pour pouvoir repartir en mission après avoir été «tabassé» de la sorte.

M. David Pratt: Il y a un aspect à propos de la rémunération de spécialiste qui m'étonne beaucoup: votre prime n'ouvre pas droit à pension. En connaissez-vous la raison?

Adj Jim McCluskey: Non. Cela remonte à 1991. À l'époque, nous avons demandé que notre solde soit réexaminée. Quelques officiers supérieurs s'en sont chargés et c'est pour cela d'ailleurs que j'ai demandé que nous soyons représentés lors de tout réexamen éventuel dans l'avenir. À cette époque, le groupe d'étude avait conclu que le niveau I était très bien et que la prime de technicien SAR n'ouvrirait pas droit à pension. Partant du principe que cette prime était imposable, elle devrait également ouvrir droit à pension, nous avons demandé des explications. On ne nous a fourni aucune raison.

M. David Pratt: Merci, monsieur le président.

Le président: Quel est votre programme de travail?

Adj Jim McCluskey: Il est fondé sur des périodes de 30 jours. Si j'étais de service aujourd'hui, je rentrerais à 16 h et j'assurerais la veille jusqu'à 7 h 30 le lendemain matin. Je devrais être prêt à intervenir sur demande pendant cette période. Le lendemain matin, je ferais une journée normale de travail, de 8 h à 16 h.

À cause de la politique qui consiste à nous faire prendre obligatoirement nos congés, nous n'avons pas le choix et nous nous retrouvons en sous-effectif pour faire le travail, ou du moins nous n'avons pas assez d'heures-hommes pour assurer le service. La plupart de mes camarades—des militaires en général et pas uniquement les techniciens SAR—passent la première heure de leurs quatre heures d'astreinte à travailler dans leurs fonctions régulières, ce qu'ils ne sont pas censés faire.

Le président: Merci pour votre exposé.

Adj Jim McCluskey: De rien.

Le président: Nous accueillons maintenant Barb St. John.

Mme Barb St. John (témoigne à titre personnel): Bonjour. Je suis venue vous faire part de mes préoccupations au sujet des anciens combattants. Mon père, mon beau-père et mes deux grands-pères sont des anciens combattants.

Aujourd'hui, je veux vous parler de ce qui m'inquiète à propos de mon père. Il a servi au Canada, aux États-Unis et en Europe continentale, de 1939 à 1945, puis il est demeuré dans l'armée au Canada, après l'armistice. Il a reçu l'Étoile de 1939-1945, l'Étoile France-Allemagne, la Médaille de la Défense et la Médaille de la guerre de 1939-1945. Malheureusement, il n'a pas de régime d'assurance médicale et comme il gagne plus de 1 477 \$ par mois, quand on tient compte de son revenu et de celui de son épouse, il n'obtient aucune aide du ministère des Anciens combattants pour ses lunettes et ses soins dentaires.

J'ai l'impression qu'on pioche constamment dans les maigres revenus des personnes âgées. Par exemple, il y a deux ou trois ans, on a décidé que ce qu'il devrait payer au titre des frais médicaux allait doubler. J'ai téléphoné aux renseignements pour savoir ce à quoi un ancien combattant pouvait prétendre et j'ai quasiment dû tirer les vers du nez des gens qui étaient au bout du fil. Pourquoi donc les représentants du ministère des Anciens combattants ne sont-ils pas plus abordables? Pensent-ils faire leur travail en limitant les prestations auxquelles les anciens combattants ont droit et en veillant à ce qu'ils ne soient pas mis au courant? C'est, malheureusement, l'impression que j'ai retirée de mes échanges avec ces gens-là.

• 0905 

J'ai fait plusieurs appels et je ne suis tombée qu'une seule fois sur une personne de bonne humeur et pleine d'entrain. Toutes les autres avec qui j'ai parlé m'ont semblé manquer de patience et, parfois, j'ai même eu l'impression de m'entretenir avec un mur. Si j'avais été une personne âgée essayant d'obtenir un renseignement, je crois que j'aurais perdu courage et que je me serais sentie un peu stupide; j'aurais même certainement raccroché le téléphone sans obtenir de renseignements.

J'ai bien reçu tous les livrets et tous les renseignements qu'on m'avait promis en réponse à mes questions, je les ai trouvés informatifs et de plus, imprimés en gros caractères, ce qui en rend la lecture plus facile pour les personnes âgées. Cependant, le revenu plafond n'y est indiqué nulle part. Il faudrait pourtant bien l'indiquer, même sous la forme d'un addendum, en première page, pour que ceux et celles qui gagnent plus que ce montant ne perdent pas leur temps à soumettre une demande.

Je sais, par ailleurs, que les frais d'obsèques des anciens combattants ne sont pas payés si l'intéressé touchait un revenu supérieur à la limite en question.

Pourquoi met-on un prix sur nos anciens combattants? Ces gens-là sont allés faire la guerre pour protéger notre mode de vie et la liberté dont nous jouissons aujourd'hui. Sans leurs sacrifices, nous ne pourrions pas vivre cette vie. Il arrive souvent à mon père et à mon beau-père de parler de toutes ces choses-là et je sais que la nuit, ils ont encore des cauchemars de guerre.

Va-t-on dire à leurs épouses, quand elles deviendront veuves: «Excusez-nous, mais nous ne pouvons pas enterrer vos maris, qui ont combattu pour notre pays et pour notre liberté, parce que vous gagnez un peu plus que le seuil prévu»? Soit dit en passant, ce niveau de gain est inférieur au seuil de faible revenu établi en 1996 par Statistique Canada.

Arrêtons de comptabiliser leur argent comme nous le ferions avec l'argent de poche d'un enfant. Où est-on allé chercher ces 1 477,67 \$? Cela veut dire que le Canada, l'une des nations les plus riches du monde, accepte tout à fait l'idée qu'un ancien combattant doive vivre avec 17 000 \$ par an, soit près de 1 000 \$ de moins que le seuil de bas revenu établi en 1996 par Statistique Canada.

Nous commettons une grave injustice envers un grand nombre d'anciens combattants. À cause de ce genre de politique, la plupart d'entre eux sont contraints

de vivre une vie modeste, exempte de tout luxe. Nous pouvons certainement faire mieux que cela. Ne versons-nous pas une retraite aux députés s'ils ont siégé six ans? Ne versons-nous pas des milliers de dollars aux sénateurs pour un travail minimum? Nous gaspillons quotidiennement des milliers de dollars pour faire fonctionner le gouvernement.

Nous devrions rendre hommage à nos anciens combattants. Ne nous contentons pas de nous en souvenir quelques minutes par an, le 11 novembre. Occupons-nous d'eux maintenant, tant qu'ils sont encore auprès de nous. Combattons pour nous assurer qu'ils aient une bonne qualité de vie, eux qui se sont battus et se sont sacrifiés pendant tant d'années pour que le Canada devienne le meilleur pays où vivre dans le monde. Montrons-leur de façon tangible que nous apprécions ce qu'ils ont fait pour nous. Payons-leur leurs lunettes et leurs soins dentaires dont ils ont besoin. Portons-les en terre avec dignité quand leur temps est venu. Montrons-leur du respect, remercions-les maintenant, rassurons-les, disons-leur: «Ne vous inquiétez pas, nous sommes là pour veiller sur vous».

Merci.

Des voix: Bravo, bravo!

Le président: Merci beaucoup pour votre exposé.

Capitaine Deborah March.

La capitaine Deborah March (témoigne à titre personnel): Merci beaucoup.


Excusez-moi pour ce bref retard.

Je suis la capitaine Deborah March. Je suis chef de la clinique des services sociaux de la base. C'est la deuxième fois que je m'adresse au CPDNAC et je dois dire que je trouve très gratifiant de voir la foule amassée ici; il est aussi très gratifiant de voir autant de députés présents.

Les problèmes auxquels nous sommes confrontés, en tant que travailleurs sociaux, tiennent bien sûr au fait que la solde est insuffisante et que les logements laissent à désirer, mais ils vont bien au-delà. Nous ne pouvons plus nous permettre de faire fi de la composition changeante de la famille de militaire. La famille où le mari prend la mer et où la femme reste à la maison pour s'occuper des enfants n'est plus la norme. Nos militaires et nos enfants sont un microcosme de la société civile et l'on y retrouve de plus en plus de mères célibataires, de pères célibataires, de parents

dont les deux font carrière à l'armée, de couples où les deux travaillent, dont l'un à l'armée, de couples de même sexe et de familles dont les enfants ont des besoins spéciaux.

Le nombre accru de déploiements opérationnels a une incidence de plus en plus marquée sur nos familles de la Formation Halifax. La majorité de nos clients de travail social s'accommode assez bien de la sujétion de l'état militaire. Cependant, quand les difficultés personnelles des familles de militaire viennent gruger l'efficacité opérationnelle, nous sommes tenus d'apporter aux personnes concernées un service de soutien et des traitements qui doivent être perçus comme étant sûrs, confidentiels et efficaces pour leur permettre de résoudre leurs problèmes. Nous avons l'obligation de favoriser et d'instaurer un climat d'ouverture pour les familles se prévalant de nos services.

• 0910 

J'aimerais vous parler un peu de certaines tendances qui sont apparues depuis ma dernière comparution devant le CPDNAC. J'estime, comme mes collègues travailleurs sociaux du bureau, que ces tendances sont dues à une augmentation du nombre de déploiements et au fait que les services sociaux de cette formation sont maintenant mieux connus.

Depuis 1996, nous avons constaté une augmentation de 110 p. 100 du nombre de dossiers que nous avons ouverts. Le nombre total de cas, quant à lui, a augmenté de 140 p. 100.

Nous avons assisté à une très nette augmentation du nombre de couples réclamant des conseils matrimoniaux. Nous avons constaté une forte augmentation du nombre de couples demandant une médiation avant une séparation ou un divorce. Nous avons constaté une augmentation phénoménale du nombre de demandes d'intervention parvenant de directeurs d'écoles élémentaires et secondaires de premier cycle. Ils nous demandent d'intervenir dans le cas d'enfants de militaires qu'ils estiment être atteints de troubles du comportement dus au déploiement des parents.

Nous travaillons en étroite collaboration avec des travailleurs sociaux cliniques des deux centres de ressources pour les familiales militaires et, ensemble, nous offrons tout un éventail de services s'adressant à des particuliers, à des couples, à des

familles et à des groupes. La demande de services destinés à des groupes, surtout en ce qui concerne la maîtrise de la colère et la maîtrise du stress, est à la hausse. La colère et le stress en milieu de travail sont en train de frapper les familles des militaires. À la suite du programme de formation SHARP, le nombre de personnes dirigées pour une évaluation dans les causes de harcèlement est à la hausse.

We work closely with several civilian family counselling organizations in the region and we hear from our civilian colleagues that they, too, have seen an increase in the number of families requesting counselling services. It is not uncommon for military families to prefer to go to civilian services because they feel that in the military, their approach could have an unfortunate effect on their careers.

It is not uncommon for female soldiers in couples where both are in the military to be forced to give up their careers when their families can no longer cope with the increase in operational demands. Other people this morning will come and tell you more about that.

In this climate of downsizing, we realize that it is no longer possible to systematically grant assignments in the same place to couples, both of whom are military. Sometimes operational needs take precedence over family needs, although a delicate balance must be sought. Let's just say that our families deserve and need to be together.


So those are the problems we are facing. What is Training Halifax doing to address them? Well, first of all, from my strictly professional point of view as a social worker—having an 18-year career in the military in the medical services, started at the very bottom of the ladder—I must say that we are fortunate, in this Formation, to benefit from unparalleled logistical, financial and human support from the medical services, Training Health Services and our administrative branch. From the bottom to the top, training social workers receive this kind of support.

As our workload increased, I asked for an increase in my staff. My requests have always been met. We went from two social workers in 1996 to five in 1998. With this increase in staff, we are able to offer more services. We now offer anger management services—in addition to our personal therapy, couples therapy, and family and group therapy programs—self-esteem programs, couple groups, and support groups for return from United Nations missions.

For your information, after our last support sessions for a group of military personnel returning from a United Nations assignment, participants wrote a discussion paper that is moving up the hierarchy at Formation Halifax.

We have a harassment support group, a critical incident stress support group, and we are doing a study of what kind of care to be provided to injured staff. Certainly, during your travels in Canada, you will have often heard about the 1997 national study on the care of wounded personnel, which highlights the existence—among military personnel, their spouses, widows and orphans of deceased military personnel—of a deep sense of being abandoned. We simply need more care. We need more attention. The former Head of Social Work Chaired the National Task Force, which made several recommendations to establish standards of care across Canada.

But again, I think we are doing a very good job at Training Halifax. As Admiral Miller pointed out before me, we are well aware of the challenges we face.

• 0915 

Our daycare is scheduled to open on June 1, 1998. I find that absolutely wonderful. As someone who is no longer very young, I find it quite progressive that the army decides to open a daycare. As of June 1, therefore, we will have 22 child care spaces and, with the support of the admiral, we will be able to increase that number in the fall, if the demand warrants it.

In addition, we have cottages in Falls Lake. We benefit from significant support from the services of the Judge Advocate General for all the complex psychosocial and legal issues facing our clients. There is a growing need to increase the number of services provided by uniformed social workers.

In 1997, military social workers learned that their numbers were going to be downsizing and that, in the best case, we would find ourselves with 11 social workers in uniform, at most. A year later, we are considering increasing our workforce by actively recruiting. Thus, at this training alone, we have created a third defined position of military social worker. We have excellent cooperation from civilian social workers and we have just requested the creation of a fourth defined position.

Our commanders are asking us to provide more and more social services for individual assessments and treatments, for professional development and to provide support to victims of critical incident stress. Our team specialized in this last type of intervention, at the training, includes 12 leaders and 22 trained facilitators. We are ready to intervene 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a week. In addition, we have a team of 4 people who are on standby at 24 hours' notice, for operations in the Gulf.

I would like to make some recommendations from the perspective of military social workers, civilian social workers and our client group.

–Families should be subjected to a comprehensive psychosocial assessment before long deployments at sea. This will allow us to avoid having to repatriate military personnel because of the worsening of certain family problems.

–Resources for preventive action must be increased.

–We need to provide better support to our wounded and ill members and their families.

–We need to better plan for comprehensive administrative and medical services for our wounded peacekeepers as well as follow-up services for families when a soldier is at rest or has died. We need national standards for all of this.

–We need to maintain and even increase the support that senior officers and senior non-commissioned officers in this formation are beginning to provide us.

–We must continue to provide training on racism and harassment prevention. A single one-day workshop on these themes is not enough. At the social services office, we welcome not only people who feel they have been harassed, but also people who have been accused of harassment, some rightly, but others by mistake and others unfairly. The effects of such accusations on the morale of the person, his family and his unit are devastating. Our social work clients simply need more services.

–Finally, at a time when less and less promotion is being given within the military, other ways must be found to enshrine the superior performance of military men and women.

Thank you very much.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mr. Benoit.


Mr. Leon Benoit: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you very much for your presentation. You said that many feel the need to go civilian because they feel that if they go to military social workers, psychologists or whatever, they could suffer.

First of all, do you think this perception is justified?

Capt Deborah March: Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Based on what I have seen here over the past 30 months, the senior managers in this training are very responsive to the needs of their staff. To put it bluntly, sir, if we don't get what we want from one level, we move on to the next, and usually we end up having what we need for our customers.

Mr. Leon Benoit: But then, what do you attribute this perception to?

• 0920 

Capt Deborah March: To a combination of factors. I think people talk a lot. For example, a soldier who has not been treated properly by his superiors in the past, communicates his perception around him. But I believe the staff is now getting the attention they deserve.

Mr. Leon Benoit: That is encouraging.

Capt Deborah March: Yes.

Mr. Leon Benoit: On the other hand, there is the issue of harassment, for which you are calling for more training sessions. I wonder how effective that is and whether these sessions really solve the problem of harassment when dealing with a unit commander who is completely intolerant at the outset. You just have to expose that kind of thing, make it very clear and not tolerate harassment. That's it.

Capt Deborah March: I absolutely agree with you, sir.

Our clients are increasingly sending us requests for intervention in social work and demanding investigative standards for harassment cases; that is exactly what we do in this training. In addition, they are increasingly asking us to go and investigate outside the military system.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Thank you very much.

Capt Deborah March: You're welcome.

The Acting President (Mr. Hec Clouthier): Mr. Pratt.

Mr. David Pratt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will ask you to risk yourself a little by indulging in a reasoned conjecture. You talked about the psychosocial problems in the military. Given that, obviously, some of these problems are reported and others are not, could you venture to give me the approximate percentage of military personnel affected by the problems that you are addressing, whether they are marital difficulties, behavioural disorders in children, cases of SSTP, in short, the whole range of problems that can affect —

Capt Deborah March: Unfortunately, Mr. Pratt, I will not be able to give you that percentage approximation. What I can tell you is that in 1995 when I came to this training, we were opening 12 to 18 files a month. This figure does not include cases already ongoing. Now let's look at what happened in January, February, March and April. In January, we opened 54 files, we opened 46 in February. March was a little slower, because we only opened 34 files, and in April we opened 49. As I said, the number of new cases has increased by 110 per cent.

Unfortunately, I do not have the percentage figures. That's the best I can do.

Mr. David Pratt: In fact, you just answered the question I was going to ask next, because I wanted to know the rate of growth in the number of cases. You also talked about prevention. I have just realized that if we invested in prevention, we would reduce quite a few problems of this kind.

Capt Deborah March: That's right.

Mr. David Pratt: What percentage of your resources are you currently devoting to prevention?

Capt Deborah March: About 30 per cent, overall. We have five clinicians working in our office. We participate in a range of professional training sessions. In fact, just recently, the Admiral's Office issued a memo recommending that all senior unit commanders consider including debriefing and stress prevention sessions following a serious accident in their professional development days. Since then, we have seen an increase in the number of requests for our prevention

services from unit commanders. When it comes to prevention, we also intervene in terms of stress management and anger awareness. Anger awareness is different from anger management. It aims to make people aware of what triggers anger in them, before the problem breaks out and they have to move on to the "control" phase. Therefore, prevention is essential and we are indeed allocating resources to these kinds of tasks.

Mr. David Pratt: Last question. Do you expect demand for child care spaces to grow?

Capt Deborah March: Absolument.

M. David Pratt: C'est bien, merci.


Capt Deborah March: De rien.

Le président suppléant (M. Hec Clouthier): Madame Lill.

Mme Wendy Lill: Merci beaucoup.

Dans ce cas, je m'intéresse à la santé des femmes. Vous avez parlé des rapports qui s'établissent avec les directions des écoles secondaires de premier et de deuxième cycle à propos des problèmes qu'éprouvent les enfants. Votre personnel consulte-t-il les jeunes? Consulte-t-il les épouses? Se réunit-il avec les mères et les enfants? Quel pourcentage de votre temps consacrez-vous à travailler auprès des familles à résoudre les problèmes qu'elles éprouvent?

Capt Deborah March: La moitié de notre temps. Nous sommes les seuls professionnels dans le secteur militaire à avoir pour mission de s'occuper des familles. La plupart des spécialistes de l'armée ont pour mission de s'occuper des militaires. Nous, on nous a demandé de nous occuper des familles. Nous passons près de la moitié de notre temps auprès des familles, en relations thérapeutiques individuelles et en consulting de couples, de familles ou de groupes.

• 0925 

En outre, nous nous faisons davantage connaître par les civils. Nous allons dans les écoles pour y conseiller les enfants, nous conseillons les enseignants sur la façon dont composer avec le stress croissant des enfants dont les parents ont été envoyés en mission à l'étranger.

Mme Wendy Lill: Faites-vous partie de ceux qui recommandent les appels téléphoniques de compassion pour que les familles gardent le contact avec les militaires déployés?

Capt Deborah March: Je ne vais certainement pas dire non. Bien sûr que nous appuyons cela.

Le président suppléant (M. Hec Clouthier): Merci beaucoup, capitaine March.

Capt Deborah March: De rien.

Le président suppléant (M. Hec Clouthier): Y a-t-il d'autres questions? Le capitaine March semble aimer répondre à ce genre de questions.

Capt Deborah March: Merci.

Le président suppléant (M. Hec Clouthier): Merci beaucoup.

Des voix: Bravo, bravo!

Le président suppléant (M. Hec Clouthier): Matelot-chef Tim Materi.

Le matelot-chef Tim Materi (témoigne à titre personnel): Bonjour, mesdames et messieurs. Je suis ingénieur naval de formation et je suis maintenant instructeur à l'école DNBC de Purcells Cove.

Hier, j'ai demandé à ma femme quel genre de préoccupations elle entretenait. Je suis un de ceux dont le capitaine March vient de vous parler. Ma famille a été directement touchée.

J'ai déjà 6 missions de l'OTAN à mon actif en 14 années seulement. Je viens juste d'entamer ma 14^e année. De plus, il y a les périodes d'entraînement.

J'ai essayé de recourir aux services dont vient de vous parler le capitaine March. En 1996, elle était seule avec quelqu'un d'autre dans ce bureau. À l'époque où je me suis présenté, le capitaine March était en permission et l'autre personne était absente.

Finalement, j'ai dû recourir à des ressources extérieures. Dieu merci, au bout d'un certain temps, c'est-à-dire après une attente d'environ deux mois, je suis parvenu à obtenir un rendez-vous de counseling pour mon fils.

Mon fils a dû suivre des séances pour maîtriser le stress parce que «papa n'était jamais à la maison». J'ai effectué deux missions OTAN en deux ans, la première de neuf mois et l'autre de dix mois.

Dans les deux semaines ou à peu près qui précèdent le départ pour une mission de ce genre, vous passez au travers d'une période d'ajustement au foyer. Vous n'êtes pas à prendre avec des pincettes, parce que vous savez ce qui s'en vient. Votre femme aussi est nerveuse, pour la même raison. Et si vous avez de jeunes enfants, ils ne comprennent pas pourquoi maman ou papa ne rentre pas à la maison.

Quand vous rentrez à l'issu d'un long déploiement de trois mois ou plus, vous trouvez que les choses ont changé à la maison. Ce n'est plus comme c'était avant. Votre femme est devenue plus indépendante. Vos enfants ne réagissent pas comme avant quand vous vous présentez sur le pas de la porte.

Je vais vous donner deux ou trois exemples de ce qui s'est passé quand je suis rentré de mission. Ma femme est venue me retrouver sur la jetée. À l'époque, mon fils avait cinq ans. Quand je me suis penché pour le serrer dans mes bras et lui donner un baiser, il m'a giflé parce que papa n'avait pas été à la maison quand il avait eu besoin de lui.

Vous avez sans doute entendu des histoires de ce genre un peu partout au pays. Cinq personnes au bureau des services sociaux pour tout le travail qu'il y a à faire, ce n'est pas assez. Il faudrait plus de ressources. Mais ce n'est qu'un conseil, comme ça en passant.

J'ai une question à vous poser. Qui a institué ce comité?

Le président: Le ministre de la Défense.

Matc Tim Materi: Qui en a choisi les membres?

Le président: Les différents partis.

Matc Tim Materi: Les différents partis eux-mêmes?

Le président: Oui.


Matc Tim Materi: Combien de temps encore allez-vous sillonner le pays avant de commencer à rédiger votre rapport?

Le président: Ce devrait être notre dernière séance à l'extérieur. La semaine prochaine, nous allons accueillir des témoins à Ottawa. Je crois que nous devons également aller à Borden et à Meaford dans deux ou trois semaines, mais c'est à peu près tout. Nous avons visité plusieurs bases un peu partout au Canada.

Matc Tim Materi: Je vais être bien honnête avec vous: je ne sais pas dans quelle mesure je dois vous faire confiance, parce que je ne vous connais pas.

Nous avons vu ce qui est arrivé dans le passé avec ce genre de comités. Les recommandations ont été adressées à Ottawa et les gens nous ont dit: «Eh bien, c'est parfait, merci beaucoup, quand nous en aurons le temps, nous nous intéresserons à tout cela».

Je veux savoir ce que vous comptez faire pour nous représenter vraiment. Nous sommes des quantités négligeables. Tout ce que nous pouvons faire, c'est vous faire part de nos préoccupations. Alors, qu'allez-vous faire? Je vous pose la question maintenant.

• 0930 

Le président: Comme je l'ai déjà dit dans le passé, le comité a pour mandat de faire des suggestions au ministre de la Défense, parce que le ministre nous a demandé de rencontrer le plus grand nombre de gens possible sur les bases. Nous espérons qu'il donnera suite à la plupart de nos recommandations.

Matc Tim Materi: Très bien, merci.

L'autre sujet de préoccupation que je voulais soulever concerne les logements militaires et leur dégradation. On dirait que les logements militaires ont perdu leur raison d'être. Voilà maintenant qu'on porte les loyers à hauteur de ceux pratiqués sur le marché. Quel avantage y a-t-il pour un matelot ordinaire, un matelot de deuxième classe, pour le mataf sans spécialité, à résider dans un logement militaire? Eh bien, il n'y en a plus.

Personnellement, j'ai choisi de ne pas aller en logement militaire parce que, croyez-le ou non, j'ai trouvé qu'il revenait moins cher d'acheter une maison et de payer une hypothèque que de résider à loyer dans cette zone close.

Comme je le disais, le logement militaire semble avoir perdu sa raison d'être. Pourquoi le matelot ordinaire, le matelot de seconde classe, le gars qui n'est pas

technicien devrait-il loger là et payer un loyer équivalent au prix du marché? Il ne peut pas se le permettre.

Cela, c'est ce qui se passe ici sur la côte est, où c'est moins cher que sur la côte ouest. Je me demande si j'aurais les moyens de vivre sur la côte ouest. C'est complètement ridicule. Voilà l'autre sujet qui me préoccupe beaucoup.

Comme je le disais, je ne réside pas en logement militaire. Parce que j'ai décidé de ne pas loger en zone militaire, je dois aller assez loin, hors de la ville, et je dois parcourir à peu près 56 kilomètres aller et 56 kilomètres retour.

Comme nous sommes en banlieue éloignée, ma femme ne peut travailler. En fait, ce n'est pas tout à fait vrai. Elle pourrait toujours prendre un autre emploi, mais je ne peux même pas me permettre d'acheter un véhicule d'occasion. De plus, comment pourrait-elle prendre un emploi quand je ne suis pas là la majorité du temps pour l'aider, ce qui veut dire qu'elle devrait mettre notre enfant à la garderie ou engager une gardienne à la maison. Une fois tout ces frais payés, que resterait-il de ce second emploi? Rien.

Vous avez entendu parler de ce problème de la solde. Eh bien, quand les premières rumeurs d'une éventuelle augmentation ont commencé à circuler, on nous a effectivement confirmé que notre solde allait être augmentée. J'ai détesté les médias à l'époque— et je continue à les détester aujourd'hui—parce que, par exemple, ils ont annoncé que nous allions recevoir une augmentation de solde de 3,2 p. 100.

Eh bien, ce n'était pas vrai. Nous n'avons pas reçu 3,2 p. 100 d'augmentation, mais seulement 1,2 p. 100, car 2 p. 100 étaient destinés à nous aligner sur les salaires de la fonction publique.

Vous, qui vous occupez de la frappe, est-ce que c'était indiqué là-dedans? Non, ça ne l'était pas.

Des voix: Bravo, bravo!

Matc Tim Materi: Il y a autre chose que je veux indiquer aux dactylographes ici. Quand l'amiral a comparu, il a parlé du *Toronto* et du fait qu'il a simplement fallu former l'équipage en guerre nucléaire, biologique et chimique. Ce n'est pas vrai. Nous ne faisons pas dans la «guerre» nucléaire, biologique et chimique, nous nous limitons à la «défense» nucléaire, biologique et chimique. Alors, vous feriez bien

de changer ce mot aussi. Vous savez comment je le sais? Parce que je suis instructeur et que j'enseigne la défense nucléaire, biologique et chimique.

Merci beaucoup.


Des voix: Bravo, bravo!

Le président: Monsieur Pratt.

M. David Pratt: Il serait peut-être utile pour certaines des personnes présentes ici de bien comprendre ce que le comité a fait jusqu'à ce jour.

Nous avons débuté nos audiences en janvier, à Yellowknife, après quoi nous nous sommes rendus à Vancouver, Esquimalt, Comox, Edmonton, Cold Lake et Moose Jaw. Nous sommes également allés à Kingston, Trenton, Val Cartier, Bagotville, Gagetown et Goose Bay, et nous voilà à Halifax.

Nous devons aller en Bosnie, pas la semaine prochaine mais la semaine suivante. Nous avons littéralement entendu... Jusqu'ici, nous avons entendu près de 500 exposés.

• 0935 

Comme l'a dit M. Bertrand, c'est le ministre de la Défense nationale qui nous a demandé d'entreprendre cette étude. Je sais que, ces deux ou trois dernières années, on a étudié l'armée sous toutes ses coutures, mais les travaux de ce comité sont sans précédent, du moins sur le plan parlementaire. C'est la toute première fois dans l'histoire canadienne qu'un comité du Parlement va rencontrer des militaires pour se mettre à l'écoute de leurs problèmes.

Je tiens aussi à ajouter que le ministre ne nous aurait pas confié cette étude, ne nous aurait pas demandé de faire tout cela, s'il n'avait pas l'intention de donner suite à nos recommandations. On ne va pas, comme ça, faire monter la pression et faire croire au changement pour ensuite laisser tout le monde. Je ne pense absolument pas que c'est cela qui est prévu.

Je crois que les gens se rendent de plus en plus compte de l'existence d'un problème, notamment à la suite des travaux de ce comité. Un peu partout au Canada, on se rend compte qu'il faut faire quelque chose pour corriger les problèmes de l'armée.

Nous l'avons vu récemment dans la couverture médiatique dont le comité a fait l'objet. Le magazine *Maclean's* a publié un article-couverture sur le sujet. Il en a été question dans les journaux nationaux, à CTV, à la CBC-SRC, sur les ondes de la radio et dans presque tous les journaux de toutes les villes que nous avons visitées.

Je pense donc que les Canadiens comprennent davantage les problèmes et les défis auxquels l'armée est confrontée.

Ainsi, quand nous soumettrons notre rapport, sans doute à l'automne, le gouvernement disposera d'environ 150 jours pour y répondre. Je crois pouvoir vous dire que la présentation de ce rapport, au stade où nous en sommes—avec les milliers de pages de témoignages que nous avons recueillis—va provoquer un grand débat. Il sera aussi sans doute l'objet d'une certaine controverse mais, en fin de compte, il sera bénéfique pour tous ceux et toutes celles qui portent un uniforme de l'armée canadienne.

Matc Tim Materi: J'ai du mal à le croire.

J'ai une question à vous poser. Est-ce que tous les membres du comité qui ont sillonné le pays et qui vont aller en Bosnie se trouvent ici ou ont-ils changé?

Le président: Ce comité est composé de 15 membres, mais vous avez ici ceux et celles qui ont participé jusqu'ici à la plupart des audiences. Ce sont ces personnes qui vont aller en Bosnie.

Vous avez dit que vous aviez comparu devant un comité semblable, mais je crois pouvoir affirmer qu'hormis les réunions de Halifax, l'année dernière, si je ne m'abuse—mais on pourra toujours me corriger à ce propos—c'est la première fois qu'un comité de parlementaires se déplace de base en base pour aller à la rencontre des gens.

Matc Tim Materi: Vous avez parlé du niveau d'attente et du fait que votre objectif n'était pas de nous donner de faux espoirs. Eh bien, à ce sujet, je vais vous dire quelque chose, qui concerne de nouveau la solde.

L'année dernière, quand il a été question d'une augmentation de solde, on nous a dit que lorsque la décision aurait été prise d'attribuer ceci ou cela à tel et tel groupe syndical—soit dit en passant, nous attendons toujours l'annonce du règlement—l'augmentation serait rétroactive au 1^{er} avril précédent.

Eh bien, selon le dernier message dont j'ai pris connaissance il y a environ un mois, un petit mot innocent est venu s'ajouter à cela, car on précise maintenant qu'elle «pourra» être rétroactive au 1er avril. Ce n'est pas créer des attentes, ça?

Le président: Monsieur Benoit.


M. Leon Benoit: Merci, matelot-chef. Tout à l'heure, vous nous avez parlé du stress que tout ce temps passé en déploiement imposait à votre famille. Aujourd'hui, l'amiral nous a dit qu'à cause de la diminution du niveau d'activités du NCSM *Toronto*—son équipage devant passer plus de temps avec les familles—le niveau d'activité augmentera pour les autres. Serez-vous touché par cela?

Matc Tim Materi: Personnellement?

M. Leon Benoit: Oui.

Matc Tim Materi: Je serai muté le 6 juillet. J'ai de la chance parce que je vais pouvoir passer une autre année à Shearwater où j'aurai enfin la possibilité d'apprendre la deuxième langue officielle.

Nous avons fait un sondage ici pour savoir combien de gens parlent la deuxième langue officielle. Vous seriez surpris du peu de mains qui se sont levées. Nous sommes censés assumer un rôle phare, ici. Nous sommes censés être un pays où tout le monde parle les deux langues officielles.

• 0940 

Au fait, je vous le demande, combien d'entre vous parlent les deux langues officielles?

Eh bien, voilà un bel exemple que vous donnez aux autres.

Des voix: Ah, ah!

Le président: Soyons justes; il y a pas mal de députés qui sont bilingues.

Matc Tim Materi: Je m'en serais douté.

Savez-vous que tous les francophones qui s'engagent dans les Forces armées sont envoyés en cours de langue anglaise pendant cinq semaines? Cependant, les anglophones, eux, ne vont pas passer cinq semaines en cours de langue française. Pourquoi?

M. Leon Benoit: Nous avons entendu parler de ce problème de formation linguistique.

Revenons-en à la question des longues périodes que vous devez passer à l'extérieur et des répercussions négatives que cela a sur vos familles... Je suppose que les répercussions seraient énormes et que ce serait très difficile dans de telles circonstances.

Vous avez parlé du rôle important des travailleurs sociaux et du fait qu'ils ne sont pas assez nombreux. Pouvez-vous m'expliquer quel genre d'aide un travailleur social peut vous apporter? En quoi vous aide-t-il? Que fait-il qui puisse vous aider et aider votre famille?

Matc Tim Materi: Je n'ai pas eu l'occasion de traiter avec les travailleurs sociaux militaires. Quand je me suis rendu à leur bureau pour demander de l'aide, je n'ai pu en obtenir. J'ai dû m'adresser à l'extérieur.

Depuis ce temps, en un an et demi, les choses ont considérablement changé à la base d'après ce que j'ai cru comprendre.

Un psychologue de l'extérieur m'a aidé à composer avec les situations de stress. Il a aidé ma femme à être plus efficace dans son rôle de mère seule, parce qu'elle est effectivement parent seul, la plupart du temps. On a également aidé mon fils à maîtriser ses colères. Nous allons là-bas et nous nous parlons avec le psychologue...

M. Leon Benoit: Vous trouvez donc que ce service vous a été utile pour...

Matc Tim Materi: Je ne peux pas parler du service des travailleurs sociaux militaires. Quand j'ai voulu en bénéficier, il n'y avait personne au bureau. Mais je suis effectivement satisfait du service offert à l'extérieur.

M. Leon Benoit: Très bien. J'aurais une dernière remarque à faire. Vous n'avez pas mâché vos mots quand vous avez dit craindre que rien ne sortirait de ce comité.

Matc Tim Materi: Je ne dirais pas cela. Si je me fie à ce qui s'est fait dans le passé, je me demande si je dois avoir confiance dans ce comité.

M. Leon Benoit: Je comprends votre scepticisme. La fiche de route du prédécesseur de ce comité n'est pas très bonne.

Mais je tiens à vous dire que ce comité ne travaille pas pour le ministre. Il s'agit d'un comité de la Chambre des communes qui travaille pour la Chambre des communes et qui fera rapport à la Chambre des communes. Il est composé de députés de tous les partis politiques.

J'espère—en fait je crois—que le rapport traduira fidèlement ce que nous aurons entendu. Je vous dis cela parce que le comité est soumis à la pression publique, parce que nous sommes placés sous les feux des projecteurs des médias et que les Canadiens et les Canadiennes découvrent de plus en plus ce qui va de travers.

Je pense que tout cela va contraindre le gouvernement à agir. En dernière analyse, cependant, je dois vous donner raison: c'est le gouvernement en place qui va déterminer ce qu'il va faire du rapport.

Nous pouvons toujours avoir le meilleur rapport au monde, mais il appartient au gouvernement d'y donner suite ou non et je ne peux rien vous affirmer à ce sujet.

Je ne sais pas si le gouvernement en est déjà conscient, mais il devra tenir compte de l'avis du public qui est maintenant beaucoup plus au courant de ce qui se passe.

Matc Tim Materi: Je vois.


Merci.

Le président: Merci, monsieur Benoit.

Madame Lill.

Mme Wendy Lill: Je vais dire quelques mots à ce sujet également. Pendant ces audiences, j'ai entendu des choses que je n'avais jamais entendues avant et je pense que l'action des médias locaux... Je crois que nous sommes en train de modifier l'idée que les gens se font de l'armée. Cette empreinte n'est pas sur le point de s'estomper.

Vous croyez que ce rapport va aboutir sur les tablettes? Je ne le pense pas. Je crois pouvoir vous affirmer que vous pouvez compter sur plusieurs nouveaux alliés. Il y a d'abord vos députés qui vont suivre de près ce qu'il adviendra de toute cette information et la façon dont elle sera intégrée dans le rapport. Toute tentative de camouflage pourrait soulever un tollé. Et puis, il y a ceux et celles qui prendront publiquement position, dont je ferai partie.

• 0945 

Vous pouvez aussi compter sur votre député fédéral; vous pourrez toujours le rencontrer et lui demander que des mesures soient prises. À Dartmouth, c'est moi qui m'en occuperai, mais il y a aussi les députés de Halifax: Alexa McDonough, Gordon Earle et Peter Stoffer. Ils vont surveiller tout cela de très près, comme tous les députés, à l'échelle du pays, qui vont surveiller ce qu'il adviendra du rapport. Ils doivent vous rendre des comptes.

Matc Tim Materi: Merci.

Le président: Merci beaucoup.

Monsieur Price.

M. David Price: Vous avez répondu à la plupart des mes questions. Je voudrais cependant vous demander une chose. Vous dites que vous résidez à 56 kilomètres de la base.

Matc Tim Materi: Oui.

M. David Price: Avez-vous déjà logé en LF?

Matc Tim Materi: Non.

M. David Price: Bien, vous avez toujours...

Matc Tim Materi: Savez-vous pourquoi? Eh bien, croyez-le ou non, ma femme ne voulait pas résider en LF. Elle avait déjà vu et entendu tellement de choses horribles et à leur sujet qu'elle n'a pas voulu. Certes, cela nous aurait aidé sur le plan financier, parce qu'à l'époque, les LF étaient subventionnés et que les loyers étaient nettement inférieurs à ce qu'ils sont maintenant.

M. David Price: Très bien. Je vous posais cette question parce que si vous aviez résidé en LF, vous n'auriez pas été aussi loin des travailleurs sociaux. Ne pensez-vous pas qu'elle aurait pu obtenir un meilleur soutien pendant vos déploiements?

Matc Tim Materi: Non.

M. David Price: Après de vos amis et...

Matc Tim Materi: Non. Avez-vous visité des logements militaires?

M. David Price: Absolument.

Matc Tim Materi: Vous avez vu leur grandeur?

M. David Price: Oui.

Matc Tim Materi: Vous êtes allé à Shannon Park?

M. David Price: Non, mais nous en avons visité d'autres ailleurs.

Matc Tim Materi: Eh bien, vous devriez venir jeter un coup d'oeil à Shannon Park et à Windsor Park, pour vous rendre compte vous-mêmes de la taille de ces logements dans lesquels on est censé faire vivre une famille—je ne parle pas simplement d'un couple, je parle de famille—pour un loyer équivalent au prix du marché.

M. David Price: Nous sommes tout à fait conscients que le logement est un grave problème. D'ailleurs, tout à l'heure, l'amiral a dit que la question du logement était son deuxième objectif. Il est très clair que les logements familiaux sont l'une des principales causes de mécontentement des militaires, un peu partout au Canada.

Sur ce, je vous remercie.

Matc Tim Materi: De rien.

Le président: Merci beaucoup, David.

[*Français*]

Monsieur Lebel, vous avez une question?

M. Ghislain Lebel: Oui.

Pour ce qui est de votre question, à savoir ce qu'entend faire le gouvernement du rapport de ce comité, j'en suis à ma deuxième expérience de parlementaire. J'étais là en 1993. J'ai été réélu en 1997 et j'ai vu bien des rapports de comité. Jusqu'à maintenant, je ne partageais pas l'enthousiasme de mes collègues des partis traditionnels, mais dans ce cas-ci, on a entendu le général Baril et le général Dallaire, qui sont venus à Ottawa nous voir et nous entendre, et s'excuser devant le comité. Je pense qu'ils se rendent à l'évidence et qu'ils reconnaissent qu'il faut... Le général Dallaire a insisté sur le fait qu'il fallait mettre l'accent sur les ressources humaines. Ils savaient que les journaux parlaient du moral des troupes.

Je crois sincèrement que le gouvernement, de bon ou de mauvais gré, va devoir faire quelque chose—on présume toujours de sa bonne foi et j'espère qu'il va le faire de bon coeur—parce que la situation est devenue catastrophique. C'est tout ce que j'avais à dire.

[Traduction]


Matc Tim Materi: Eh bien, monsieur Lebel, j'espère que vous avez raison et que ce genre de problème sera enfin réglé.

Merci.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Voices: Bravo, bravo!

The Chairman: Corporal Dave Tremblay.

• 0950 

Corporal Dave Tremblay (testifies in his personal capacity): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am Corporal Tremblay from HMCS *St. John's* where I am an OMS clerk. I have two things to say about the balance with respect to recent adjustments and previous adjustments.

I was medically reclassified in 1995. I was a sergeant in the artillery and because of this reclassification, I was given back the acquired rights to my former rank. I have not been increased since 1991. My last step change was in 1992.

I wonder why a graduating officer cadet is entitled to all the pay adjustments, all the economic adjustments and all the in step increases from his former rank when he accepts a voluntary demotion, when I had no choice. I was told, "We are sending you there, you are a corporal now, it is up to you to get used to it."

There would be, however, a possibility in terms of the pay of non-commissioned members. If you look at the standardized balance guides, you will find that there are four steps per grade. Take, for example, the case of corporals and master corporals. Right now, the way things are going in terms of service and so on, a member can retire with the rank of corporal after 20 years of service. Its pay scale is composed of four steps corresponding to an increase of \$20 per year, over four

years. He will therefore have 12 years of career left after that where, if he is not promoted, he will not receive any increase.

For officers, it's different. Take the case of the rank of captain, which has ten steps. A captain may retain this rank for ten years and be steadily increased. If he is promoted to major, he will be entitled to seven more steps. In addition, the pay scales of these two ranks do not overlap, unlike those of Corporal and Master Corporal. So, in theory, before you retire from MR, you may be entitled to seven raises, whereas if you take it as a captain or major, you will have had 17. The length of service is a little different in the case of officers who have to do 25 years while we only have to do 20 years... But there is still no comparison.

I would like to see more steps of increase to the ranks of corporal and master corporal, which are the executing ranks in the Canadian Forces.

Thank you.

Voices: Bravo, bravo!

The Chairman: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Seaman First Class Jim Karl? Perfect.

Joy Smith?

Ms. Joy Smith (testifies in her personal capacity): Hello.


Before I submit my report, I will tell you a little bit about who I am. I'm a military kid and I'm proud of it. I have been the wife of a soldier for 20 years and I am also proud of it. I have just entered my fourth year as Chair and Chair of the Board of the Debert Military Family Resource Centre, which I am very honoured about.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to come and present the concerns of the military families of Debert.

Today, I will focus on the impact of the downsizing of the Canadian Forces on the quality of life of military families. The information I will share with you has been gleaned here and there from the minutes of several public meetings we have held over the past three years at the CFB Debert detachment. We decided to focus on this aspect because we feel that its consequences for military families are quite unique.

The history of the community of Debert is explained in our report, copies of which we have given you. To summarize, Debert is a small military community that has grown from 350 families to 56.

When the downsizing began, the Department of National Defence informed the families of the members that the budget cuts would require a reduction or even elimination of most support services not directly related to core Defence missions. This was understandable in the current economic situation. We believe, however, that in this time of difficult decisions, multiple cuts, massive changes and negative media coverage, the potential impact of all measures taken, including on military families, must be taken into account—seriously and sincerely.

• 0955 

We would like to reiterate the general concerns you have been told today about the lack of job security, childcare, financial problems, housing, employment opportunities for spouses and adolescents, the lack of quality education and the repercussions of negative media coverage.

With regard to all these issues, we would like to make it clear that we are not asking for special treatment: we are simply asking that due consideration be given to families who have decided to subscribe to existing services with a view to improving the lot of their compatriots. You are entitled to such considerations if the profession you have chosen regularly takes you away from your family, makes you take risks for your life and has a negative impact on your children's education, your spouse's employability and the level of examination to which you and your family must submit.

Military families know that in order to voice their concerns, given that they are part of the public service, they have no choice but to subject their personal circumstances to public scrutiny. However, in recent media relations about the difficulties faced by some military families, it has been completely overlooked what other military families are doing for themselves.

In this regard, we would like to share with you some of the problems caused by the downsizing of Defence.

In Debert, we lost several community facilities: our recreation center, our social center, our teen club, our chapel and our kitchen services. We lost our bed and board allowances, we lost all but one of our recreational clubs. We have lost all of our military-provided social services, such as chaplaincy, MEPL staff and PSP services. We no longer have a report room, bus service or any other form of transportation. We no longer have financial advisors and our sector is no longer patrolled by the military police. We lost the elementary children's bus service, which was provided by the Department of National Defence, and we had to approach the local school board to have our children transported by bus.

CFB Halifax has worked very hard to continue to provide the key services our families need. Unfortunately, since we are 125 kilometres from the CFB, it is not easy to deal with the staff who provide these services. These people are already overworked and it is very difficult, if not impossible, for them to devote time to Debert's families unless they come and meet them in person. In addition, we no longer receive routine, regular information, and in our 1995 annual survey about the needs of the MFRC, we found that half of the families felt that they had not been sufficiently well informed about the downsizing.

The other major issue is the impact on spouses' career opportunities. This problem is not new, but it has worsened with the downsizing of Defence.

Debert's military families are facing great uncertainty... for a very long time. There is the uncertainty about whether or not to maintain the various units in the long term, and the uncertainty about housing, which has been going on for almost two years.

With respect to housing, after a full year, no agreement has yet been reached between the Canadian Forces Housing Agency and the Colchester Park Development Corporation on the transfer of military housing maintenance. For more than a year now, military families have been told by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency that there will be absolutely no work to improve or repair housing: this is not a priority for the agency, given that the housing will be transferred to a development corporation.

In our struggle to raise awareness of military families' concerns about housing, we held several meetings and compiled many files that we handed over to the hierarchy. It seems that for almost a year decisions were made without taking into

account the concerns we had raised. Housing maintenance continues to be a problem. Tenants were promised that they would be informed of decisions affecting them, but even that is not settled.

There is also the problem of isolation. In the two years since the announcement of the closure of CFS Debert, military families have indicated that they feel cut off from the rest of their organization. It is very difficult to determine responsibilities in this regard. It took a long time to get answers, information, to follow up on the complaints and to make decisions. The fact that we are 125 kilometres away from any support service is not to make things better. But the apparent lack of security and the fact that society in general was aware of our problems seems to have disturbed many families.

- 1000 

For almost six months, more than half of the old LFs have been empty. What used to be a safe, closed community has become an open, unrestricted area where anyone can come knocking on your door or driving through your streets.

Several times the FRC received calls from concerned parents who had seen strangers driving through their neighborhood, video camera in hand, filming parks and playgrounds where their children frolic. Yet it would have been so simple, to alleviate the fears of many parents, to inform them in advance of what was happening and to ask uniformed soldiers to escort representatives of future buyers or local development organizations, or ACOA officials.

Let us move on to the fact that we are not called to master our own destiny. For more than three years, we have felt like we are on the sidelines. I will give you a few examples. Local organizations meet to discuss issues that affect our military community. Local development associations take over the properties. We do not have representatives of the military community on the local committee and we are reduced to discovering what our future will be like by reading the newspapers or listening to the radio.

There is also the daily commute between home and work. For many families, downsizing has resulted in an increase in the daily distances travelled between work and home and, for others, in an unplanned move. All of this has led to unexpected separations for military families. We occasionally have to travel 250

kilometres back and forth to pick up original documents, cheques, see the doctor, see financial advisors, social workers or chaplain, or do our day-to-day business and settle our finances.

We have difficulty accessing essential services—such as the hospital, emergency services, police, medical clinics, dentistry and bank—because we are a 20-minute drive from everything and your military spouse, who works 20 or 30 minutes from the LF area, has to take the only family vehicle to work.

We also lost our basket of volunteers. The significant reduction in the number of families has been sorely felt on our ability to assume community functions and provide the recreational events necessary to keep families together, maintain their morale and limit their stress levels. This places a heavy burden on the shoulders of military personnel and their families who have to struggle to maintain community life while being overburdened in their work.

We no longer have as many choices when it comes to child care. The reduction has caused daycares to close and there are fewer teenagers or families to provide child care because there are fewer people in our small community.

The quality of education has suffered. The reduction has severely affected the quality of education for military children at the elementary level. Up to 34 children of three different levels find themselves in a single classroom with a single teacher.


Canadian military families have accepted the subjection of the military state, with the very particular way of life and challenges that characterize it; temporary deployments and the fear of losing a loved one are part of this choice.

When the complications, frustrations and uncertainties of downsizing are added to this, situations are more stressful and more difficult to cope with. All levels of the Department of National Defence must give special consideration to all these families and commit to support and empathy for them.

Outre qu'elles sont confrontées à une diminution des services locaux, à d'importants changements dans la collectivité, à une relative incertitude quant à leur avenir et à des difficultés financières en général, les familles de militaire de Debart ont eu à faire face à une couverture médiatique négative, à la mauvaise image publique qu'on a donné au métier des armes, et ils ont essuyé le ressentiment des résidents locaux à cause des conséquences économiques de la restructuration.

Il convient de ne pas oublier qu'une restructuration est un exercice qui peut traîner en longueur. Ainsi, un grand nombre des questions posées lors des réunions de 1995 n'ont pas encore reçu de réponse claire en 1997-1998. L'incertitude se prolonge donc depuis plus de trois ans.

Aujourd'hui, nous avons parlé des conséquences que la réduction des effectifs a eu sur les familles de militaire. Nous voulons aussi profiter de cette occasion pour vous faire part des résultats positifs d'un excellent programme dont l'objet est d'aider les familles militaires à faire face à ce genre de problème. Au cours des trois dernières années, le Centre des ressources pour familles de militaire de Debert s'est attaché à aider les familles de militaire dans la phase de réduction des effectifs.

• 1005 

À Debert, les familles ont eu la chance que le centre de ressources familiales ne soit pas touché, contrairement à ce qui s'est passé dans d'autres communautés frappées par la restructuration. Malgré la directive de DMFS invitant les commandants locaux à maintenir leurs centres de ressources pour les familles en dépit de la restructuration, plusieurs d'entre eux ne s'y sont pas conformés et des CRFM ont été fermés, certains même six mois avant que les familles ne soient mutées.

Il faut applaudir aux tentatives récentes visant à normaliser les services de soutien aux familles de militaire et à imaginer des formules de financement pour permettre que plus de 40 centres, partout au pays et à l'étranger, continuent de fonctionner. Cependant, la formule de financement établie en fonction du nombre de familles n'est pas sans poser certaines difficultés. Il faudrait laisser une certaine latitude aux commandements pour décider du niveau de financement minimum permettant l'application des normes minimales.

La seule constante pour les familles de militaire de Debert au cours des 30 derniers mois a été notre centre des ressources pour familles de militaire. Il a été question de réduire les services de soutien aux familles par la fusion du CRFM de Debert avec celui de Halifax.

Il faut féliciter les responsables au ministère de la Défense nationale et à la BFC Halifax d'avoir décidé de maintenir notre centre des ressources pour les familles à

l'échelon local. Cela a permis aux familles de militaire de faire connaître leurs préoccupations communes, de se regrouper pour régler des problèmes communs à l'échelon local et de participer à des fonctions familiales ayant pour objet de réduire le stress et de vivre des moments agréables. L'année dernière seulement, les familles de militaire de Debert ont donné gratuitement plus de 2 000 heures de leur temps pour améliorer la qualité de la vie des familles.

Nous avons quatre grandes recommandations à soumettre au CPDNAC.

1) que le CPDNAC fasse part au Parlement de la nécessité d'accroître le financement destiné aux programmes de soutien des familles dans toutes les bases et les stations des Forces canadiennes. Il est important que nous disposions de budgets supplémentaires pour ce genre d'activité et que nous n'ayons pas à nous battre pour obtenir une fraction de budget commun destiné au matériel, au personnel et au financement des autres coûts directs de la défense.

Il faut permettre au directeur du Centre de soutien aux familles de militaire d'élaborer, de mettre en oeuvre et d'évaluer une campagne de marketing stratégique qui soit non seulement destinée à promouvoir les services offerts aux familles, mais aussi à répondre aux problèmes de marketing social touchant à l'idée que les gens se font des conséquences de l'évaluation de tels services.

2) que le CPDNAC rappelle la nécessité d'adhérer aux paragraphes 2 et 6 des lignes directrices du DMFS relatives à la fermeture des centres de ressources pour les familles. Voici ce qu'ils précisent:

Comme le PSFM [Programme de soutien aux familles des militaires] est destiné à aider les familles où qu'elles soient situées, il est recommandé que la réduction de personnel dans les CRF [Centre des ressources pour les familles] se fasse par étapes pour coïncider avec le départ des familles. Ainsi, les centres locaux de ressources pour les familles devraient être la dernière unité à fermer dans une base ou dans une station.

De plus,

le Programme de soutien aux familles des militaires doit avoir pour objet d'apporter un appui aux familles, où qu'elles soient situées.

Dans ces conditions, les fermetures ne devraient avoir qu'une incidence minimale sur les familles ou sur la capacité de les soutenir par le truchement du programme

de soutien aux familles des militaires. Nous recommandons que cette directive soit transformée en O AFC.

3) que le CPDNAC insiste auprès du ministère de la Défense nationale sur la nécessité de tenir compte de la répartition et de la réduction des effectifs sur la qualité de vie des familles militaires. Cela pourrait se faire par la nomination d'un BPR chargé d'examiner les conséquences de la restructuration sur les familles de militaire.

En outre, le CPDNAC doit demander qu'on accorde des budgets suffisants aux communautés touchées par la restructuration, quand il est prévu de maintenir les services de soutien aux familles de militaire. Si les normes minimales ne sont pas respectées, il faudra prévoir un montant minimum pour permettre aux petits centres de fonctionner selon ces normes. Le budget doit tenir compte des différents facteurs auxquels les centres sont confrontés: capacité moindre de recueillir des fonds, moins de possibilités d'obtenir des subventions et des dons d'oeuvres de charité, moins de bénévoles pour administrer les programmes et assurer les services, pour ne citer que quelques-uns des problèmes rencontrés.

4) que le CPDNAC appuie la recommandation du DMFS contenue dans sa communication du 13 mars 1997, qui précise ce qui suit:

[...] le temps est peut-être venu de demander la possibilité d'utiliser une partie des fonds publics pour financer des places de garderie dans certaines circonstances.

[...] il est peut-être temps d'envisager une forme d'aide directe pour les conjoints de militaire au moment de l'affectation. Il pourrait s'agir d'un crédit pour la recherche d'un emploi, pour le perfectionnement professionnel, pour la formation linguistique ou pour lancer une entreprise à domicile. [...] On pourrait négocier l'autorisation d'utiliser les fonds publics de la sorte [...]

• 1010 

Nous espérons qu'après avoir pris connaissance des problèmes que vivent les familles de Debert et de l'importance des services de soutien aux familles, votre comité fera tout son possible pour s'assurer que les bases qui feront l'objet d'une restructuration dans l'avenir pourront maintenir les services offerts par les centres

de ressources pour les familles à un niveau raisonnable, cela pour aider véritablement les familles en ces temps de difficulté et de défis. Merci beaucoup.

Le président: Merci pour votre exposé. J'ai une petite question à vous poser.

Un peu partout dans nos audiences, nous avons entendu dire qu'il est difficile pour les conjoints de trouver un emploi quand le mari ou la femme est muté dans une autre base, mais c'est la première fois qu'on nous parle du problème des adolescents. Pouvez-vous me dire s'il est très répandu?

Mme Joy Smith: Je ne peux vous en parler qu'en ce qui concerne notre communauté.

À un moment donné, Debert était considérée comme une affectation semi-isolée, parce que nous n'avions pas directement accès à certains services, comme les transports publics. Nous ne pouvons pas compter sur une très grosse assiette économique. Les possibilités d'emploi sont très limitées à cause de notre emplacement. Pour aller travailler, les adolescents doivent se rendre à 15 minutes de voiture de là, à Truro. Comme il n'y a pas de service de transport public, ils ont besoin d'un véhicule, ce qui n'est pas le cas de la plupart d'entre eux, dans notre collectivité. La plupart du temps, le seul véhicule familial, quand les adolescents sont en âge de conduire, est utilisé par le militaire ou par son conjoint pour se rendre au travail.

La plupart de nos adolescents, qui ne sont pas nombreux, font de la garde d'enfants. Celui ou celle qui veut garder des enfants peut le faire tous les soirs.

Quant à l'emploi des conjoints, c'est extrêmement difficile à cause de notre emplacement.

Le président: Une autre chose que je veux tirer au clair. Dans votre mémoire, vous dites que l'Organisme de logement des Forces canadiennes va transférer une partie des LF à la Société de développement du Parc Colchester.

Mme Joy Smith: C'est exact.

Le président: Les LF vont-ils être vendus?

Mme Joy Smith: La Société de développement du Parc Colchester a été mise sur pied pour prendre la relève et administrer les propriétés après le départ des Forces armées de la FSC de Debert.


Je pense qu'il s'agit d'un simple transfert, pas d'une vente officielle. Quatre-vingts des 120 LF du secteur de Debert ont été transférés à la société de développement local qui les loue à des civils. L'office de logement des Forces canadiennes en conserve 40 qui sont tous occupés par des familles de militaire, et a confié la maintenance à contrat à une entreprise privée.

Depuis une bonne année maintenant l'armée négocie avec la Société de développement du Parc Colchester pour le transfert de l'entretien de ces maisons. Je crois que le dernier délai a été fixé à mars 1997, mais je ne sais pas si le contrat a été signé.

Le président: Merci pour votre exposé.

Mme Joy Smith: Merci de m'avoir accordé votre temps.

Le président: Madame Smith, M. Benoit a une question.

• 1015 

M. Leon Benoit: Merci pour votre exposé, madame Smith. J'ai été particulièrement heureux d'entendre vos recommandations.

Vous avez dit être gamine de militaire et en être fière; vous avez dit aussi être l'épouse d'un militaire depuis 20 ans et en être tout aussi fière. Ainsi, vous avez passé toute votre vie à l'armée.

Mme Joy Smith: C'est cela.

M. Leon Benoit: À quels changements avez-vous assisté au fil des ans, pour ce qui est du moral des hommes et des femmes en général, au sein des Forces armées?

Mme Joy Smith: Nous avons passé les trois premières années de notre mariage à Debert, et nous y sommes revenus il y a cinq ans. À l'époque, mon mari était sous-officier subalterne et nous avions tous deux trouvé que, dans cette communauté autonome et dynamique, le moral était bon et que les gens avaient un bon sens de la communauté. Nous savions ce qu'on attendait de nous. Nous savions à peu près comment les choses allaient se passer. Nous nous sentions en sécurité, parce que nous nous levions le matin et que nous savions qu'il n'y aurait pas de... qu'on allait avoir du travail et que la vie pourrait se continuer ainsi.

Ce sentiment de sécurité a disparu en même temps que tout ce à quoi nous tenions: nous pouvions compter sur un logement si nous en avions besoin, nous pouvions nous prévaloir de services de counseling en cas de besoin, les militaires n'allaient pas manquer de travail... Bref, autant de choses qui ont disparu petit à petit, parce qu'on nous les a retirées sans égard envers ceux et celles qui restaient derrière et sans savoir comment on allait maintenir le service.

M. Leon Benoit: Donc, ça doit faire mal quand on vous fait le genre de réflexion que vous citez dans votre mémoire: «Vous saviez à quoi vous attendre, si vous n'aimez pas cela, partez».

Mme Joy Smith: Tout à fait.

M. Leon Benoit: Ça doit vraiment faire mal.

Mme Joy Smith: C'est très pénible et on me l'a dit à moi, personnellement.


Je me rappelle l'époque où mon époux s'est engagé dans l'armée, l'époque où nous nous sommes mariés. Nous n'avons jamais imaginé, à ce moment-là, que nous n'arriverions pas à joindre les deux bouts avec ce qu'il gagnait. Le fait qu'il attende jour après jour pendant deux semaines pour savoir s'il va ou non partir pour le Golfe, pendant que moi je console des amies dont le mari a été désigné pour partir... tout cela fait partie de la vie de femme de militaire et je l'accepte, mais quant à savoir ce dans quoi j'allais m'engager... Je sais ce à quoi ma mère pouvait s'attendre, parce que j'étais là, que j'ai vécu à ses côtés, mais je ne me serais pas attendue à faire face au genre de situation à laquelle nous sommes maintenant confrontés.

M. Leon Benoit: Que pensez-vous du changement survenu dans la façon dont les médias traitent les militaires et relatent les événements les concernant?

Mme Joy Smith: Je comprends que pour se vendre les médias sont obligés de faire du sensationnalisme. Je le conçois, mais je vais vous répondre en vous donnant un exemple au sujet d'un récent numéro de *Macleans* où il est question de toutes ces histoires concernant des familles de militaire.

M. Jim Jamieson, de la direction du soutien aux familles, a répondu à cet article en s'étonnant du tour sensationnaliste qu'on avait donné aux aspects négatifs de la vie des familles de militaire. Il s'est étonné qu'il n'y ait pas d'autres articles insistant sur le travail des centres de ressources pour les familles ou sur ce que les familles font

de leur côté pour s'en sortir d'elles-mêmes. Les organismes de soutien aux familles de militaire et de services sociaux sont extrêmement importants, mais il y a des conjoints et des conjointes qui ne veulent plus accepter cela et qui montrent ce qu'ils peuvent faire par ailleurs.

• 1020 

Les médias peuvent justifier leur goût du sensationnalisme parce qu'ils doivent se vendre mais pour ce qui est de la vie des gens, nous aurions certainement mérité plus qu'un paragraphe de six lignes sur ce que les familles font pour s'en sortir elles-mêmes.

M. Leon Benoit: Merci.

Enfin, pensez-vous que l'idée que le public se fait des hommes et des femmes servant dans l'armée, des militaires canadiens, a changé dans le temps?

Mme Joy Smith: Avant la Somalie, je dirais que le grand public, sauf celui qui vit à proximité d'une base ou d'une station, était à peu près indifférent à la vie militaire. Il savait que nous étions là et c'était à peu près tout. Bien des notions préconçues à notre égard sont fausses. Par exemple, des gens m'ont dit que je ne paie pas de loyer, que je ne paie pas d'impôt et que l'armée me chauffe et m'éclaire gratuitement. «Je peux y aller dans votre armée, dites?», me lançait-on. Avant la Somalie, la population était soit indifférente, soit désinformée.

Après la Somalie, les gens ont commencé à nous montrer du doigt et à se mettre en colère. Il est devenu un peu plus difficile de marcher la tête haute dans la rue, de regarder les gens dans les yeux et de déclarer «mon mari est militaire». Voilà pourquoi nous portons des rubans translucides. Je porte le mien tous les jours. Quand quelqu'un me demande ce qu'il représente, je dis avec fierté que c'est pour montrer mon appui à l'armée canadienne, aux militaires et à leur famille. Dans une famille de militaire, même s'il n'y en a qu'un qui porte l'uniforme, tout le monde mène une vie de militaire; cela, peu de gens le voient.

M. Leon Benoit: Merci beaucoup.

Le président: Capitaine Sean Taylor.

Le capitaine Sean Taylor (témoigne à titre personnel): Bonjour, monsieur.

Je suis tellement habitué à m'adresser à mes supérieurs en disant madame ou monsieur, que j'en ai développé un tic.


Je serai bref. Je vous ai fait remettre mon mémoire et comme je ne compte pas lire ces trois pages, je ne prendrai pas trop de temps.

J'estime que nous aurions besoin d'un ombudsman extérieur à l'armée. Il existe bien actuellement un système permettant de corriger les problèmes, de régler les différends ou les injustices subis par les militaires. Il s'agit de ce qu'on appelle la réparation de préjudice. Cependant, un de mes amis a constaté que celui ou celle qui se prévaut de cette procédure de redressement de tort est ensuite victime de représailles subtiles, surtout si un supérieur s'en est trouvé embarrassé.

J'ai un problème qui me poursuit depuis un an et demi. Le mois prochain, je vais me prévaloir de la procédure de redressement de tort pour le régler. Je m'attends à subir certaines conséquences, mais je ne peux plus supporter ce problème. Il faut que je m'en débarrasse.

Je sais, par ailleurs, que des gens ont peur de s'exprimer ouvertement par crainte de représailles et qu'ils subissent en silence les injustices qu'on leur fait. Ils ne veulent pas faire de remous. Ils ne veulent pas être la prochaine personne à perdre son emploi à cause de la réduction des effectifs, celle dont on se débarrassera de l'escadron ou du service ou encore celle qu'on mutera ailleurs. Pour tous ces gens-là, j'estime que nous avons besoin d'un ombudsman, de quelqu'un qui pourra nous donner un coup de main de l'extérieur de l'armée, de sorte que les gens s'estimant victimes de représailles subtiles puissent tout de même s'adresser à quelqu'un.

Voilà l'essentiel de ma présentation.

• 1025 

Le président: Monsieur Benoit, vous voulez poser une question?

M. Leon Benoit: Je ne me rappelle plus la question que je voulais poser, mais vous envisagez un ombudsman hors du cadre militaire et qui serait chargé de réparer les torts. C'est cela?

Capt Sean Taylor: Le système de réparation de préjudice au sein de l'armée demeurerait, mais je pensais surtout aux gens qui ont peur de recourir à cette procédure parce que, ce faisant, on s'expose à tous ceux qui ont pris part à votre

petite injustice. Les gens doivent pouvoir s'adresser à quelqu'un tout en protégeant leur anonymat un certain temps, en attendant de savoir ce qu'ils peuvent faire pour régler leur problème.

M. Leon Benoit: Donc, votre ombudsman ne représenterait pas forcément un dernier recours, mais ce serait une première étape qui pourrait intéresser la personne ayant un problème, des préoccupations ou un grief et qui ne se sentirait pas suffisamment à l'aise pour recourir au système formel. L'ombudsman serait-il un intermédiaire dans ce cas?

Capt Sean Taylor: Ce serait peut-être la meilleure chose à faire. Je ne sais ce que je pourrais vous dire d'autre, mais sachez que des gens ont peur de se prévaloir de l'actuel système formel et je connais des gens qui ont été victimes de représailles subtiles. Je ne veux pas m'enfoncer trop dans le détail, parce qu'ils m'ont demandé de ne pas le faire. J'aurais aimé qu'ils se présentent devant vous, mais ils ont encore peur de parler, même à vous. On nous a garanti que nous ne subirions aucune représaille en nous présentant devant vous, malgré cela, ces personnes ont peur de s'exprimer ouvertement.

Que l'ombudsman soit une personne à qui l'on s'adresserait en dernier recours ou en premier lieu... ce serait quelqu'un, hors de la chaîne de commandement, à qui l'on pourrait faire part de ses griefs sans craindre de représailles. Nous pouvons déjà nous adresser à l'extérieur de la chaîne de commandement. Par exemple, si j'avais un grief relatif aux droits de la personne, je pourrais m'adresser à la Commission canadienne des droits de la personne. Cependant, pendant que la Commission étudierait ce cas, tout grief que j'aurais déposé précédemment au sein des Forces armées serait mis en suspens en attendant que la Commission rende son jugement. Je ne suis pas sûr de ce qui se passerait par la suite.

Ce serait quelqu'un à qui l'on s'adresserait si l'on avait peur d'entamer une procédure de recours.

M. Leon Benoit: La Commission sur la Somalie a recommandé la création d'un poste d'inspecteur général indépendant, complètement en dehors de la structure militaire, qui serait chargé d'examiner des problèmes militaires. Hier, quelqu'un a recommandé que l'on nomme une personne de ce genre dans chaque base. C'est peut-être beaucoup plus cela le genre d'ombudsman dont vous voulez parler. Peut-

être que cette personne pourrait relever de l'autorité d'un inspecteur général indépendant. Les deux iraient bien ensemble.

Je comprends tout à fait ce que vous voulez dire et j'apprécie votre intervention.

Merci.

Capt Sean Taylor: Merci, monsieur.


Le président: Monsieur Pratt.

M. David Pratt: Merci, monsieur le président.

Je n'ai pas vraiment d'opinion sur la formule d'un ombudsman pour régler les plaintes, mais je vais jouer les avocats du diable pour voir ce que cela pourrait donner de recourir à un officiel situé en dehors de la chaîne de commandement pour se pencher sur des problèmes de personnel.

Tout cela ne se ramène-t-il pas à une question de commandement? Quand un supérieur, que ce soit un capitaine, un major, un colonel ou autre, a sans cesse des problèmes avec plusieurs de ses subalternes, cela n'est-il pas indicatif qu'il existe un problème dans la façon dont ce supérieur traite ses gens?

Pour pousser un peu plus mon raisonnement, je vous dirai que je n'ai pas l'impression que vous allez régler le problème, que vous allez vous attaquer aux racines du mal. Si au lieu de favoriser la confrontation entre un subordonné et son supérieur, vous recourez à une tierce partie que vous chargerez d'examiner la situation, j'ai l'impression que vous n'arrangerez pas les choses relativement à d'éventuelles promotions à venir, parce que tôt ou tard le responsable du problème découvrira ce qui s'est passé étant donné qu'il y aura enquête.

• 1030 

Voici ce que j'essaie de vous dire, doucement mais sûrement: sauf si les deux antagonistes règlent leur problème entre eux, plutôt que de recourir à une tierce partie, chacun se retranchera dans ses positions. Ne pensez-vous pas que c'est ce qu'il risque de se produire si l'on faisait intervenir un ombudsman?

Capt Sean Taylor: Oui et non. L'ombudsman doit avoir les pouvoirs nécessaires pour faire appliquer les décisions qu'il rend, et s'il constate l'existence d'un problème systémique, il analysera alors la situation de toute l'unité.

Il y aura toujours des conflits de personnalité. Le problème, dans l'armée, tient en partie au fait que si je me plains à mon supérieur, il pourra toujours me dire: «Tu as parfaitement raison, je vais en parler à mon patron». Son patron, pourra lui rétorquer: «Désolé, je ne vois pas où est le problème, je ne veux plus en entendre parler». Si tel est le cas, je n'ai plus qu'à me prévaloir de la procédure de recours.

Cela fait 15 ans que je suis dans les Forces armées et j'ai vu comment fonctionne le réseau des copains, monsieur; il fonctionne très bien quand on les embarrasse. Ils se vengent.

Des voix: Bravo, bravo!

M. David Pratt: Mais embarrasser quelqu'un et essayer de travailler avec lui pour résoudre un problème, c'est deux choses différentes.

Des voix: Ah, ah!

Capt Sean Taylor: But there is no point in trying to solve a problem with a senior officer, sir. That is his decision. If he does not like what you say, he will point it out to you and it will stop there, unless you want to avail yourself of the appeal procedure, in which case you go after the network of old friends again, because you go over his head and you will expose the problem outside the unit. If so, the problem is no longer hidden at the unit level.

Mr. David Pratt: It is obvious that there can be different types of command within the army.

Capt Sean Taylor: Actually.

Mr. David Pratt: Some will be more communicative and more inclined to consult to resolve issues with their subordinates; others, on the other hand, may be more autocratic and tyrannical.

Capt Sean Taylor: As far as I'm concerned, my boss tried to help me as best he could, but he got slapped on the fingers. It is now up to me to avail myself of the appeal procedure and to move my problem up the hierarchy. I have to start with him, although he can't do anything for me and he admitted it. The file will then be forwarded to his boss and if I do not like his answer, I can go up another notch.

At the third level, the problem is no longer local. It comes out of the squadron and everyone in the army can read it. This can be embarrassing for my superiors, especially if I have really been the victim of an injustice.


I will give you an idea of what is going on. I was temporarily seconded to another unit. In the army, the term "temporary" is synonymous with six months. I was told—and you will find it in my brief—that I was going to be seconded as a reinforcement to headquarters during the exercises in which Canada participates. I agreed to help. The unit I was leaving was understaffed. My two bosses told themselves that they would not miss me for six months and that if I were to be deployed for a week or two, for these exercises, that no one would die.

One Friday afternoon, in November 1996, I learned that I was going to be sent to Rwanda for six months and that's when I realized what all this was going to mean. I asked questions around me, but no one knew that this position could be deployed overseas. No one bothered to ask me if I was really volunteering for this mission. I had enlisted in the air force.

I do not refuse to serve my country. I am very proud of that. So read my first paragraph. I'm very proud of what I do and I love what I do. I had no problem wearing my uniform during the Somalia scandal. I wanted it because I believed in it and I felt that we had to let people know that we were not all like that.

I have tried to get out of this problem. If I file my grievance and it is accepted, I will finally be relieved of this temporary assignment, 21 months later. That is the other part of my complaint. I was asked to do it for six months and it took me 21 months to be released. In fact, the unit with which I am supposed to carry out this mission has even suggested to me that staff should not remain on the waiting list for more than a year, because then they are placed on a secondary list.

I know I will cause some embarrassment, because in accepting this assignment, I helped two other members on short-term deployments. Since I accepted this deployment, I put myself on standby for other deployments, because I'm a good guy. It has reached the stage where I can't even get out of this assignment and no one wants to replace me, because I've been too stupid.

• 1035 

I tried to get out of it. I tried to talk to my boss about it. I have explained to you what has happened in this regard. I now have no choice but to avail myself of the appeal procedure. I am very serious and I am afraid of the repercussions that this could cause. That is part of the reason why I decided to come and speak to you, because I was told that if I came here, I would not be subject to reprisal for what I said. In fact, you are going to serve me a little shield.

I think we should have an ombudsman in part for that, to act as a shield, because that person would be responsible for monitoring what happens to the complainants, once the injustice complaints have been resolved; it would be a person who could ensure that there was no retaliation.

I hope I have answered your question.

Mr. David Pratt: I think so. As I said, I do not really have an opinion about the ombudsman, but you have enlightened us a little.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Capt Sean Taylor: Thank you for your time, sir.

Voices: Bravo, bravo!

[French]

The Chairman: Ladies and gentlemen, we will now hear from our last witness, Corporal Mario Castonguay.

[Translation]

Corporal Mario Castonguay (testifies in his personal capacity): I will speak to you in French, because my English is not very good.

[French]

My name is Mario Castonguay. I have been a corporal and a member of the Canadian Armed Forces for over 17 years. I asked to appear before the committee to talk about my health issues.

For the past year, I have been suffering from back problems. The Canadian Armed Forces tried to cure me with physiotherapy treatments. After six months of treatment, the therapist gave me a letter to my doctor, informing him that physiotherapy could not solve anything for me and that I had to have surgery.


I witnessed the effectiveness on the military side, where they made sure that I got a physiotherapy consultation as soon as possible. The quality of the services and the number of appointments that I have been kindly given have been excellent, because these services are still available in military hospitals. But then things go wrong. Because of all the budget cuts that the Canadian Armed Forces have suffered, it is no longer possible to have surgery by an Armed Forces surgeon, as was previously the case in the major military hospitals in Ottawa, Halifax and Valcartier. I even wrote a letter to the chain of command to find out if the Armed Forces could speed up the process. I was told that I could only have surgery faster if my health worsened. Personally, I find it completely ridiculous.

When I decided to serve my country 17 years ago, there were pros and cons. But I still enlisted in the Armed Forces. Among the advantages was the fact that there was no snagging on the medical side. We knew that if something happened to us, the army would take care of us and get us back on our feet as soon as possible. Now it's changed a lot.

I will tell you what I went through after my physiotherapy. They started by giving me a month of medical leave, after which I started working every other day again. I now only work half days. I had to take two tablets of Tylenol 3 and two of Ibuprofen three times a day, and one of Reactin. I followed this dosage for three months and had to stop because I was no longer in the world. My wife found me grumpy, nervous and very aggressive, not to mention all the other health problems that these drugs caused.

Now I live with my evil. There are mornings when it takes me up to half an hour to get out of bed. I only take two tablets of Tylenol 3 at bedtime. My children and my wife find that I have a better character like that. I sleep almost every afternoon after work so I can put my back back back back in a straight line, so to speak. But if I take my two-year-old son and get him up to play with him, I feel him afterwards and I have to lie down to put my back back, otherwise I become all crooked and have trouble walking.

In terms of my pride, in front of my co-workers and at home, it hurts not to be able to do many things. It's very morale.

• 1040 

I do not believe that giving medication to a person so that he no longer feels his pain is a good long-term solution. The Canadian Armed Forces should have maintained its exceptional level of service in its hospitals. It was one of the good sides of military life, knowing that if we ever had a health problem, the Canadian Armed Forces would take care of us as quickly as possible.

I hope that my testimony will help this committee and that improvements will be made on the medical side in the Canadian Armed Forces. I don't wish anyone to experience what I'm going through right now.

I still don't know when I'm going to be operated on. I find it difficult to live from day to day, without being able to make holiday plans, for example. If I'm planning a vacation for this or that date, maybe that's when the civilian hospital will call me and tell me I have to go for surgery. If I left, I would lose my turn.

Here's what I don't understand. Why does the Canadian Armed Forces not have the power to control when one of its members will undergo this or that operation? Do I understand that if the specialist or surgeon is busy for the next two years, I will only be operated on in two years? This is a situation that must be remedied as soon as possible, not only for me, but also for all members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

To conclude, I would like to add that in my heart I have chosen to serve my country and that I do not ask for much in return: only a little recognition and respect for the human being that I am. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Corporal. Have you warned your superiors of your back pain?

Capl Mario Castonguay: As I was telling you, I sent a memo to the chain of command. My commanding officer met with the base sergeant. All they can tell me is that they can't do anything because a civilian surgeon has to operate on me. We have to wait. The process could only be speeded up if my condition worsened. That does not make sense.

The Chairman: Are you now doing the same work as before?

Capl Mario Castonguay: No. I am usually responsible for the proper functioning of the computers on the base. Right now, the only thing I do is stay at my desk, answer the phone and route calls, for half a day. As you can see, it's a waste of time

and effort since due to my absence, my teammates have more work to do. We don't know when it's going to end. That is what is tiring. If at least a date was set and I knew that I would be operated on September 9, for example, I would know what to expect.

I call them every month. This month, I called again and was told that the May schedule was full, but the June schedule was not yet over. In February, the first time I saw the civilian doctor, he told me that the operation would take place in the same month. I called him at the end of February and his secretary told me she still couldn't give me a date, but it would probably be march. So, on March 9, I called back and she told me that it would not be in March or April since the schedule was already full. I waited until May and I am still told that it is full and that the June schedule is not yet established. We can deny it for a long time like that. I only have three years left until the end of my career. Will I be able to have surgery before I have a 20-year career?

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Capl Mario Castonguay: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

The Chairman: Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes our hearings in Halifax. I would like to thank the admiral and all the others who were able to make our stay very pleasant; thank you also for coming and giving us your views. Thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.