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The Honourable Shawn Murphy

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• (1520)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.)): I call to order the meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, pursuant to Standing Order 108(3), chapter 2, “National Defence—Military Recruiting and Retention” of the May 2006 Report of the Auditor General of Canada.

We have with us today the Auditor General, Sheila Fraser. Accompanying her is Hugh McRoberts, the Assistant Auditor General, and Wendy Loschiuk, principal.

From the Department of National Defence we have Rear Admiral Tyrone Pile, chief, military personnel; Brigadier General Linda Colwell, director general of personnel generation policy; and Commodore Roger MacIsaac, director general of recruiting.

I want to welcome you, Mrs. Fraser, and your personnel.

Mr. Pile, Ms. Colwell, Mr. MacIsaac, welcome to the committee meeting.

Before we ask for opening statements from you, Mrs. Fraser, I'd like to spend about five minutes of the committee's time, so we can get it off our plate, to review, approve, or change, if necessary the minutes of the subcommittee on agenda and procedure that was held yesterday. The minutes have been circulated.

In paragraph one we talked about committee business and proposed schedule. But in the third paragraph, under “Proposed Schedule”, I'd like to add to the minutes, in a friendly amendment, after 2006, “or such shorter time as determined by the committee”. That was clearly decided upon at the meeting.

Are there any comments on the minutes of the subcommittee of agenda and procedure?

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): *Excusez-moi.* Just repeat that, please.

The Chair: I would like the words added, after 2006, “or such shorter time as determined by the committee”.

Are there any other comments on the minutes? If not, the chair would entertain a motion that the subcommittee minutes be agreed to. It is moved by Monsieur Laforest.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much, colleagues. We're going to move to the general meeting now. I would ask the Auditor General to present her opening statement.

• (1525)

Ms. Sheila Fraser (Auditor General of Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We are very pleased to be here today to discuss our status report on the Department of National Defence's efforts to recruit and retain men and women in the regular forces. As you mentioned, I am accompanied today by Hugh McRoberts, Assistant Auditor General; and Wendy Loschiuk, principal for our defence audits.

The audit work for the status report was completed in January 2006. In this audit we examined the progress made by National Defence in addressing the recruiting and retention problems that were noted in our 2002 audit. At that time, we were concerned about the declining numbers of trained regular force personnel, which represents the amount of staff available for duty. This decline occurred as the intake of new recruits fell and the number of members leaving the military rose.

As you know, National Defence and the Canadian Forces require an effective and trained workforce in order to perform the military tasks they are asked to do. Indeed, stress due to a shortage of members became evident when the department reported in its 2004-05 performance report that an operational pause was necessary for it to regenerate.

I am pleased to report that National Defence has achieved satisfactory progress in addressing our concerns reported in 2002. By 2005, it had stopped the decline in the number of trained and effective members and was actually showing a small increase. We looked at the planning it did to establish the annual recruiting and training numbers and found it to be sound.

Since 2002, the department has come very close to achieving its recruiting targets each year. At the time of our status report, the department was working towards a national recruiting strategy to bring more focus and cohesion to its recruiting efforts and was working on performance measures for 2007 to help it assess the success of its recruiting efforts.

[Translation]

The Department was also working on attrition. It conducted surveys to better understand why people were leaving the military and changed its terms of service to better meet its needs. Although results from these efforts are less evident, I am encouraged by the Department's efforts to better understand this problem.

As well, National Defence has taken action to improve its military human resources management although more could be done to improve its human resources information.

As you know, however, I did raise concerns about the Canadian Forces recruiting process because problems that do persist could jeopardize plans to expand the military. Despite its progress in recruiting, many members continue to leave, with the result that while the trained effective strength has not declined, it has not increased by very much either. Because of the rate of attrition, the net number of trained and effective personnel resulting from bringing in 20,000 new members since 2002 is only about 700. This is a concern if the military is to grow significantly over the next several years. When starting this Status Report, we expected to see an increase in the number of people who were trained and operational, so that the military could alleviate shortages in key occupations. We have stated instead that many of the key military occupations that were suffering shortages in 2002 was still short in 2005.

[English]

National Defence needs to identify what it should do to keep its members. About 80% of the military population is in a high attrition group, meaning they either are in the first few years of military service or could soon be eligible to retire.

The recruiting process itself has leakage, some of which is to be expected and some of which is unnecessary. The system needs to identify and recruit suitable candidates in a timely and effective manner, as about 28% of applicants abandon the process because of delays. As well, methods need to be found to make a military career more attractive to underrepresented groups, those being women, aboriginal persons, and visible minorities.

The system should enable the military to grow, but at the time of our audit, we found that intake was well below what was needed for the Canadian Forces to expand.

• (1530)

[Translation]

National Defence also needs to be able to assure itself that it is recruiting the best candidates, but the measures it uses have not been validated to show they predict military suitability or to show that all recruiters are using them in the same way. I am glad to note that the Department agrees that it needs to validate these tools and plans to finish this work by the end of 2008. It also has replied that it is establishing a Recruiting Training Centre in 2007, which is also a positive step.

National Defence also needs a training system that can handle and increase in recruited members. While the basic training system has expanded, there were still some difficulties on the next level for occupation training. The limited capacity of the training system at this level causes bottlenecks and is a blockage to getting skilled people into operations when and where they are needed.

[English]

Mr. Chair, since our audit, National Defence has gone through some changes and now plans to increase by some 13,000 regular force members. This committee may wish to find out more about

how the department ensures that it is bringing in good candidates who have the right skills and the profiles the military needs; how the department ensures that its investments in recruiting, training, and retention contribute to the long-term sustainability of the military population; and finally, when an action plan will be in place to bring about the necessary improvements.

Mr. Chair, this concludes our remarks on military recruiting and retention.

We would be pleased to answer any questions the committee members might have.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mrs. Fraser, for your excellent comments, as usual.

I'm now going to call upon Admiral Pile for his opening remarks.

Mr. Pile, I know you've tabled a fairly lengthy report. Obviously, you've put a lot of time and effort into it, and I want to thank you for that. However, we do have a rule that we normally adhere to. We'd like to keep the opening comments to within five minutes. So I'd like you to paraphrase your report, if possible. We can attach it to the minutes, if you wish. There's no problem doing that. There's no way you can read this in five minutes, so I'd like you to keep your opening remarks to five minutes or less.

Thank you.

Rear-Admiral Tyrone Pile (Chief, Military Personnel, Department of National Defence): I've done a quick audit, Mr. Chair, and I will keep it to about five minutes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, lady, gentlemen. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to provide some commentary on the Auditor General's report on recruiting and retention to outline some of the activities we are currently embarking upon and to share with you some of the success we are achieving as we progress with force expansion for the Canadian Forces.

Although my focus will be on the successes we have made in addressing the Auditor General's recommendations, I will also highlight some challenges that still remain. Regarding the Auditor General's report, I must first note that the report is an accurate reflection of the state of play as it existed for the 2002 to 2005 period covered.

The Auditor General's team noted our considerable progress made since the last report in 2002 and correctly pointed out some areas where we did not progress as well or as quickly as intended.

The report itself centres on four key issues: recruiting, retention, retention strategies, and the need for clarity on responsibilities and authority with regard to personnel management and what we call personnel generation. Allow me to make a few comments on each of these issues, commencing with recruiting.

It is important to point out that the years covered in this most recent report were pre-force expansion. Indeed, the 2003 to 2005 period was one in which the Canadian Forces was stabilizing after years of downsizing, followed by a short, sharp spike in recruiting and a period of planned, slow increase to achieve a more reasonable trained effective strength. Trained effective strength is basically our measure of Canadian Forces members who are trained to deployment level and who are available for deployment.

In fiscal year 2005-06 we commenced what has become known as the first tranche of force expansion. The first force expansion requirement, the one on which we based the 2005-06 strategic intake plan, required an increase of 5,000 regular force over five years. We achieved 106% of our strategic intake plan last year, effectively increasing the strength of the Canadian Forces by more than 1,000. Over the course of this fiscal year 2005-06, a larger force expansion was announced. This new plan will see the Canadian Forces move to a total paid strength of approximately 75,000 regular force. This strategy will see the Canadian Forces grow in phases, with a first step to reach a total paid strength of 70,000 regular force by fiscal year 2010-11.

I have recently given direction to begin processing applicants using new protocols designed to increase the efficiency of our recruiting system while maintaining Canadian Forces standards. The new protocols are designed to move from the sequential applicant processing system used during previous years of zero growth and/or downsizing to a system of concurrent steps. For example, criminal record and credit checks have been moved forward to occur while verification of new applicant information or electronic verification of service for applicants with prior military service is being conducted.

Advertising plays a huge role in the attraction process. After all, if people do not know we are hiring, they are less likely to apply. On the subject of advertising, I must admit that we do not have scientific performance measurements that show the return on investment for advertising dollars spent. I can say, however, that advertising campaigns do increase awareness, and when campaigns are running there are more individuals showing interest and more applicants. As well, experience shows that about one month after advertising stops, interest and applications decline.

My colleagues in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand report similar results. The Canadian Forces advertising budget was recently increased from \$5 million to \$15.6 million, which is similar to a comparable allied nation such as Australia.

● (1535)

With respect to retention, we continue to develop and build a retention strategy with a view to enhancing a Canadian Forces culture of retention. Performance measures for this strategy remain elusive because of the wide range of activity included under the retention rubric. From quality of life initiatives to fair compensation and education and training opportunities, to family and member support initiatives, we know that all of these types of initiatives contribute to establishing a two-way commitment that is essential for creating and sustaining a culture of retention.

Over time, we have maintained an overall attrition rate of approximately 6.5%, a rate that is the envy of our allies. If anything,

these rates are at the lower limits of the healthy attrition required to ensure force renewal.

To establish conditions for success, the military human resources group has undergone internal reorganization consistent with the Chief of the Defence Staff's principles, in that we have established a command-centric, operationally focused entity, known today as the Military Personnel Command, led by the chief of military personnel, the position I fill. Internally, we have reorganized to focus on specific lines of operations and to separate policy from service delivery. This new structure is more in keeping with the military personnel generation function and provides the command-centric view so necessary for providing clear direction.

The Chair: Admiral, you're into the thing by six and a half minutes. Perhaps if you have a few concluding thoughts, we'll give you another fifteen seconds or so.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: These complete my introductory remarks.

Voices: Oh, oh!

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I wish to thank you for your interest.

The Chair: You're right on time. We thank you very much.

Again, I want to thank you for your opening remarks and I want to thank you for your appearance here today.

Colleagues, we're going to start the first round of questions. Again, I would caution members to keep their questions short, concise, and relevant; we do not need three- to four-minute preambles. We're not here to discuss foreign affairs policy; we're here to discuss the Auditor General's report.

And to the witnesses, we'd like the answers to be—

● (1540)

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Are you trying to muzzle members of Parliament?

The Chair: Yes, I know. Certainly, if that's what you call it, that is what it is.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Williams: And I thought freedom of speech prevailed in this place!

The Chair: Not in this committee; it does in other committees.

A voice: It's a bad influence for the government.

The Chair: And witnesses, I'd like you to keep your answers short and to the point. We discourage long dissertations.

Having said that, we're going to go to Monsieur Proulx, *pour huit minutes, s'il vous plaît*.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Ms. Fraser and Mr. Pile, welcome to both you and your teams.

How are you, Ms. Fraser?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: I am very well, thank you.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Excellent.

Ms. Fraser, in your audit follow-up, did you focus in particular on bilingualism or on the language used by those applicants recruited? I am asking this question because I have heard complaints that it is harder for a French-speaking Canadian that it is for an English-speaking Canadian to pass the exams and assessment interviews. Have you had the opportunity to focus on that specific area?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: Mr. Chair, that is not an area we audited in this particular audit. I think that that is probably more a matter for the Commissioner of Official Languages than it is for us. We audited the overall recruitment and retention system, but did not focus on specifics such as bilingualism, for example.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: But in reviewing retention methods, did you not consider the reasons for non-retention? Did you not have the opportunity to look at why it is difficult to keep employees?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: Actually, we did. We looked at the surveys the Department conducted with the Canadian Forces, and it was not clear that that was an important factor. I think that there were issues around families which came out of the survey.

Ms. Loschiuk may be able to elaborate.

[*English*]

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk (Principal, Office of the Auditor General of Canada): When we looked at the retention, we tried to determine exactly how many people were leaving at a very high level. We did not break it down into which groups specifically were leaving—for example, visible minorities, or by language or by gender. We were only, at this stage, very much concerned about what the impact was on the ability of the Canadian Forces to have bodies available.

When we asked to see the reasons for leaving, we reviewed the surveys the Canadian Forces had done. In those surveys, we did not see any mention of individuals leaving for language reasons. There was nothing in there to indicate to us that this was an issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Did you factor in language when you surveyed the jobs and recruitment? You mentioned retention, but what about recruiting? Did you ever wonder about that?

[*English*]

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: Again, we were looking at the number of recruits who were brought into the process from a very high level, and we were determining what the issues were that were causing recruits not to make it to the end of the process. During our audit work, we highlighted those points of concern, and that was not an area that was raised as a concern during our audit work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: In your opinion, what were the reasons given most often for not hiring someone?

Second, what are the main reasons that prevented people from remaining within the armed forces?

• (1545)

[*English*]

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: We have indicated in the chapter, and we'll draw your attention to page 60—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: In the French or in the English version, Ms. Loschiuk?

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: In the English version.

[*English*]

There is an exhibit—2.8—and it indicates all of the reasons why people would fall out of the process. National Defence has kept very good records on indicating why people do not make it to the end of the selection process, and those are the reasons generally given there. You can see, if you're looking for the reason most applicants appear to be out of the process, it's because they've either lost contact or the individual has chosen to voluntarily withdraw, and that was 28% of the total.

Ms. Wendy Loschiuk: We asked the question, what is “lost contact”? It was explained to us that the recruiting centre was no longer able to get in touch with the individual.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: What do you qualify as “lost contact”?

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you.

Mr. Pile.

[*Translation*]

Good afternoon.

Do you have anything in your statistics on recruiting that would indicate a problem with recruits who are not hired, who are not kept on because of a problem with language, in other words, they are French speaking and have trouble with the English language? Do you have any statistics on that? Do you feel that it is a problem?

I represent Hull—Aylmer, a local riding, which is probably 75% francophone. People often come to my riding office to tell me that they have always wanted to have a career in the armed forces, but that they had a hard time with the exams and the interviews, because they were expected to speak mainly in English. So it was difficult for them. That is the version that I hear. I'm not saying that it is necessarily true, but this is what I am told. I would like to hear what you have to say about the recruiting process.

Is there a problem for a unilingual francophone or for someone who is not fluent in English when it comes to finding employment in Canada's Armed Forces?

[English]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Monsieur, it should not be any problem whatsoever because for the entire selection process, that process is conducted in the language of that individual's choice, whether it be French or English. So the entire process, the examination, the interview, if it was a French-speaking individual, would be conducted in French. If there is a situation, as you have heard reported to you, then that is something I would investigate, because the process should take place in the language of their choice.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Okay.

I have one more question—short and sweet again.

I don't doubt that you have interviews in French or in English—no problem—but if somebody carries out an interview in French and is not particularly comfortable in English, would that be a strike against him or her?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Absolutely not, no. We use the standard criteria for every applicant wishing to join the Canadian Forces.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: So whether they are a unilingual francophone or a unilingual anglophone, you are testifying today that the chances to be hired—equal qualifications—are the same?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Absolutely.

As a matter of fact, just looking at some of our recent results—and I'll get Commodore MacIsaac to provide you with some of the details—we've had some very significant advances in recruitment within the province of Quebec.

Commodore Roger MacIsaac (Director General, Recruiting, Department of National Defence): If I may, Mr. Chairman, over the past five years or so, the typical area where we received the most recruits was Halifax, areas where there is a strong military presence. But last year, the most recruits were enrolled in the province of Quebec. As a matter of fact, Quebec City was the most significant, by performance measure, if you wish, for bringing in the number of recruits. We are very happy about that.

• (1550)

Mr. Marcel Proulx: I have just a very short question of clarification. If somebody living in western Quebec is recruited in your Ottawa office—because my understanding is that you don't have a recruitment office in western Quebec, it's on this side of the river—would that be considered a Quebec recruit or an Ontario recruit?

Cmdre Roger MacIsaac: I would be guessing to answer that. I can confirm, but I suspect it's Ontario.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Could we ask the witnesses to answer us, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: I'll ask if they can get back to the examiner and give full details as to the procedure in the Gatineau/Hull/Aylmer area.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: I'm talking about western Quebec.

The Chair: Western Quebec, yes.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you. Merci.

The Chair: Merci beaucoup.

Admiral Pile.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I just wanted to say, we had a very large recruitment enrollment ceremony this past June in Ottawa, and those recruits were from western Quebec and also Ontario. They were enrolled from the province in which they applied, but I don't know if we actually distinguished them from the recruiting centre. Obviously, we distinguish where they come from.

I'm not sure how the statistics are applied, but certainly the province of residence is counted towards that province. We will get back to you with a full clarification.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Proulx.

Mr. Laforest, you have eight minutes, please.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Good afternoon Ms. Fraser and Mr. Pile.

In reading your report, Ms. Fraser, we see that you noted an improvement over your 2002 findings. However, a little further on, I see that, for various reasons, there has been some difficulty in filling certain specialized positions.

At paragraph 2.17 of your report, you say that shortages exist in some support occupations. These would include ammunition technicians, logistics officers, and doctors. Considering the fact that there are military operations ongoing in Afghanistan, I have some concerns about the lack of qualified personnel in these areas.

You say that a recruiting effort is underway. We want to increase the regular force by 13,000 members. Your report states that, over the past four years, 700 new members have been hired. At that rate, it will take 75 years to recruit another 13,000. I might be mistaken in my calculations, but in terms of a net increase, those targets are way off.

Elsewhere in your report, you mentioned the appointment of an assistant deputy minister-military human resources. In paragraph 2.67, you say that this authority was not being enforced.

Do you ever get the feeling that the recommendations you made relating to our armed forces in 2002 were indeed implemented but ultimately are being ignored? For example, an assistant deputy minister was appointed, but nothing has changed when it comes to recruiting. I see that as a problem. I would like to know how you feel about it.

Ms. Sheila Fraser: We followed up the recommendations. What we saw in 2002 is very different from what we see today. In 2002, the numbers in the armed forces were declining. I didn't see any plan to at least stabilize the attrition.

When we compare the situation to the recommendations that we made in 2002, the progress is satisfactory because the numbers are no longer dropping and there has been a levelling off. Of course, the situation has changed, because they intend to substantially increase the number of troops.

Essentially, our message is that recruitment can no longer be done in the same way. If we want to increase enrolment, then things have to change. The armed forces agree with that assessment and have taken the necessary steps. As to accountability, Adm. Pile has begun to deal with those issues. An auditor must reserve judgment and wait three or four years before deciding if an action plan has yielded the expected results. And we must not minimize the nature of these tremendous challenges.

As you mentioned, in 2002, we had noted shortages in certain specialized occupations. The situation persists in 2005. There is a rather high turnover in some areas; in fact, it can be as high as 30%. There are very specific reasons why the armed forces must have an action plan. We must not forget that retirement numbers will be increasing and there will be more new recruits as well. The attrition rate is higher for those two groups. I am not saying that all is well and that everything has been taken care of. An action plan is required. This is something that the committee could examine. You could ask for an action plan to deal with certain more specific issues. The admiral might be able to help you with that.

• (1555)

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: On that point, Adm. Pile, to go back to what I was saying about Ms. Fraser's report as it relates to shortages in the subgroups, there is a need for munitions technicians, logistics officers and doctors. As Ms. Fraser said, these positions are essential in the case of a deployment.

Do you have any specific plan to immediately address this situation? I am asking because there are operations underway at this time. Does that not represent quite a risk?

[English]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: It's important for the committee to understand, Mr. Chair, that we operate in a very competitive labour market. There are a number of trade skills and professions in Canada that are in demand everywhere—in fact, around the world. When you look at physicians and highly skilled technicians for the navy, air force, and the army, we are competing with a very competitive market.

We have placed special emphasis on our action plans to target these particular occupations where we're having difficulty making sure we have sufficient numbers. In doing so, we've had some recent successes, especially with physicians. One area in which we're continuing to experience some difficulty is with our technicians, especially in the navy. So we're continuing to place extra emphasis and focus on those areas.

You're absolutely right, Monsieur, we have to ensure that we have sufficient people in those trades and professions to carry on the work we do.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Merci.

The Chair: Merci beaucoup, Monsieur Laforest.

Thank you very much, Admiral Pile.

Mr. Williams, for eight minutes.

Mr. John Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, Mr. Chairman, let me say how proud we are of the armed forces, especially in the difficult times they have today in Afghanistan. Parliament and the Government of Canada stand fully committed to the work you're doing and we're proud of what you're doing. If you have an opportunity to pass that on to any member of the armed forces, please do so on our behalf. We'd appreciate that.

• (1600)

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I will, and thank you, sir.

Mr. John Williams: That being said, Mr. Chairman, I do have some questions and concerns about what's going on with the recruiting and how long it takes.

You mentioned a difficult competitive environment out there, a shortage of skilled labour, and so on. When the private sector sees somebody good, it gets them on board right away because it doesn't want to lose them to someone else. You take months and months, and, as you say, you even lose contact with people who say, "I guess they don't want me in the army, so I'm going to go somewhere else that will hire me." Why haven't you addressed the issue of the time the person applies to the time they become a member of the forces? As the Auditor General points out, it can take eight months. Why so long?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: We've taken a lot of action to address the entire process. Becoming a member of the Canadian Forces involves, as you well know, a significant commitment, and we do have very high standards. They have to go through an application process, a screening process, if you will, for both their medical and security, and then obviously we assess them for their aptitude to become a member of the Canadian Forces.

On the steps we've taken recently—and we can provide you with very clear details on what we've done—I mentioned in my remarks that we used to have a sequential process we walked through.

Mr. John Williams: I noted that, and now you're concurrent and it's still taking too long. I understand you have to have security and stuff like that, but you must focus on doing the job quickly and doing it right. The private sector has figured it out. My question is, why are you just getting around to it now?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: We've figured it out and we've taken action on this. As a matter of fact, we have a system in place right now where 30% of our applicants...this is taking into consideration statistically the current health of our youth. About 25% are immediately taken out of the equation because of medical issues.

Mr. John Williams: It seems to me, and time is always short in our case, that in exhibit 2.7 the Auditor General points out that if you pass the medical exam, you pass the medical exam. If you don't pass the medical exam, you can be hanging around for up to six months to find out. I guess you've got second reviews, second opinions, fourth opinions. If the person is not fit, don't you just say, "I'm sorry, we'd like to have you, but you can't make it, therefore you have to go elsewhere"?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I'm glad you asked the question in that context. I'll finish what I was going to say first, and that was in our new process we are anticipating we'll be able to make an offer within five days to 30% of our applicants.

Mr. John Williams: That's good, but the other 70%?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The other 70% within thirty days.

To follow up on what you said about the issue where someone can take up to six months, you've all heard of the waiting list for doctors in various provinces around the country. Well, there is a demand to have specialists. If someone comes in with a medical condition and we pick it up in our initial screening, and if that individual must see a specialist, then that individual is into the provincial system in the province they reside in. We are waiting for the same specialist other people are waiting for to get that applicant processed. We're trying to address that by bringing in our own doctors and specialists, but that is going to take some time. Once again, we're dealing with that competitive market I talked about earlier.

Mr. John Williams: Attrition. Looking at the numbers here in exhibit 2.4, there was a dearth of applicants accepted from nine to thirteen years ago. It seems to me there was a change in government from nine to thirteen years ago. That would have been program review, at which point there was a downsizing right across government, and the military as well. As the Auditor General pointed out, fifteen years and over...when these people retire you've got a big hole to fill. Are you addressing that problem in the managerial ranks now, before waiting until it becomes a crisis?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: We call that the forest reduction plan bubble. That bubble is moving through as latent; the tail end of the baby boomers are starting to reach retirement age in the Canadian Forces.

What we are doing is, in cases where people are qualified and competent, we've been advancing them into managerial positions. To fill in some of those positions, we've been bringing in as reservists people who have retired. Right now we are managing, and I hope we're near the tail end of that bubble. We're also considering looking at potentially bringing in individuals from other nations who can fill some of the mid-level instructor-type positions in our Canadian Forces.

•(1605)

Mr. John Williams: Other nations? Non-Canadians?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Non-Canadians, that's correct.

Mr. John Williams: I see that it says in exhibit 2.7, "Applicants who are not Canadian citizens.... Landed immigrants can be enrolled in the Canadian Forces in very rare circumstances...." How many non-Canadians are in the forces?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I don't know how many non-Canadians are in the forces at the moment, so I can't give you that statistic. But I can get back to you on that one.

Mr. John Williams: I know my time is likely running short, Mr. Chairman, but I talked to one of the recruiting personnel in the reserves a number of years ago about why they don't do an exit interview with people leaving the reserves so they can find out if they may be doing some things wrong and can improve the retention rate. He seemed rather taken aback that the forces would talk to people who are leaving rather than talking to people who are entering.

The reason I raise that issue, Mr. Chairman, is that I know a young person who was in the reserves. Quite frankly, he gave up in disgust because he would show up on a Saturday morning and hang around all day and nobody was giving him any orders. They just sat around and did nothing. He loved it when they were on exercises. He enjoyed it. But most of the time no one knew who was doing what and there was nobody in charge, so he finally said, "Shove it", and went home.

That has to be not only dispelled, but you have to address these kinds of issues. Are you addressing these kinds of issues?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I can't speak for other units and organizations in the Canadian Forces, but if it was mine, that wouldn't be the case. That individual would be really busy and excited about staying in the organization.

Having said that, we do have a comprehensive set of exit surveys for all members of the Canadian Forces.

Mr. John Williams: For the reserves too?

Brigadier-General Linda Colwell (Director General, Personnel Generation Policy, Department of National Defence): I can't guarantee that they are provided to the reserves, but they certainly should be.

Mr. John Williams: Will you let us know on that one?

BGen Linda Colwell: We can get back to you on that.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: But there certainly is a comprehensive set of exit surveys, both when people are retiring from the Canadian Forces and also for those individuals who choose to leave prior to retirement.

Mr. John Williams: And I notice that in paragraph 2.15 of the Auditor General's report, it says there are some occupations in which you're overstaffed. You had about 940 personnel in excess, which is actually up from what the AG found in 2002. You went on to explain it by saying you need to have a few people in reserve because some will leave.

It seems to me that if you expect attrition in skilled areas, then you staff to ensure that you don't end up with a shortage. But when the AG points out that you have an excess, you say that's okay and that it's not an excess because you count the numbers differently, shall we say.

There seems to be some poor planning here, in that you have a dearth of applicants, or you have a shortage of people in one area and an oversupply in others. Why does this happen? The private sector wouldn't do that.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The Canadian Forces personnel system is a dynamic organization. As you're aware, we now have almost 64,000 total paid strength, and to—

Mr. John Williams: But that's small compared to some big private organizations.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Admiral Pile.

Thank you very much, Mr. Williams.

Mr. Christopherson, for eight minutes.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you all very much for your presence today. It's much appreciated.

Just a reminder to my friend across the way, Enron is the private sector too. There's nothing magical about the private sector. They don't hire humans from some other place, other than the public sector

•(1610)

Mr. John Williams: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. David Christopherson: I believe I have the floor, Mr. Williams.

So to suggest that somehow there's some kind of special efficiency built into the word "private", I would suggest is a little bit misplaced.

First off, I want to congratulate...well, I'll join in with Mr. Williams, seeing that it was a fine way to start, and offer up our support. But unlike them, some of us happen to believe there is plenty of room to be very supportive of our armed services, our individuals, especially the soldiers who are on the front line, and yet be willing to have a political debate about what the mission is. We believe that separation is legitimate and real and allows us to unanimously say there is support for the troops while we perhaps differ on what they've been assigned to do.

Let me just say that I was pleased to see, in the third point, that there's been such satisfactory progress. That's really key for us, taking a look at where you've been and how you've responded to previous concerns that have been raised. I'm very pleased to see this here, and I think it says a lot about the kind of work that's being done. The more I'm involved—and I step in sometimes for my friend on the defence committee—I thoroughly enjoy appreciating and understanding more the professionalism of our services on a firsthand basis, and this just backs that up.

Having said that, I also have a few questions to raise. I'm going to hit a couple of hard questions first. They're not loaded; they are what they are.

Given the fact that we are in the midst of a war, I'd be curious to know whether or not we have an increase in AWOL—assuming we still use that term. I get that from the old movies. But if that's the term, do we have a growing problem with soldiers leaving active service?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: In terms of those soldiers serving in theatre, I know of no instances of absence without leave.

Mr. David Christopherson: Excellent. I'm glad to hear that.

The recruiting ads just started up, and there has been some debate about the ads, whether they're a good thing or a bad thing. I want to raise an issue about the fact that you chose one of the areas of the country where there's the greatest unemployment.

I understand that makes sense from a recruiting point of view, but it does beg the question of whether we don't have enough to offer people who have real choices, that they might make this a choice. Do we feel, as a nation, that we're in a position of having to go to people who have fewer choices and therefore our potential success rate may be higher?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The choice of start location was just that—a start location. It was just to get a sense of reaction to the advertising. We've actually launched the campaign nationwide as of October 9.

Mr. David Christopherson: Good, because the experience we've seen from the Americans in Vietnam is somewhat troubling, in terms of who actually went and served and died—the demographic. So I'm glad to hear that's the case. In fact, I wouldn't mind hearing at some point, Chair, a report on that regional attraction and how that's going, so that, quite frankly, we aren't just reaching out to people who are desperate and saying, "You've got no choice, but here's something for you." I would think if we want to maintain the professionalism we want in our armed forces, it has to be based on something other than, "I didn't have any other choice in life."

I'll leave that with you.

The Chair: Mr. Christopherson, if I may, are you asking for that?

Mr. David Christopherson: Yes, I was just leaving that with you as a request to be picked up later as something for the committee.

The Chair: Is it available on a regional basis, Admiral Pile?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Absolutely, it is.

The Chair: Can you get back to the committee with that information?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I was just uncertain as to what additional information—

Mr. David Christopherson: Actually, to be going forward, Chair, I appreciated that it was a great answer. He said they started there and they're going to go nationwide. That's great. I just wonder if there will be regional breakdowns available as we move forward to ensure we aren't drawing from one region more than others, and what that might tell us.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I have to tell you, overall it's a good news story for the Canadian Forces. Since the early 1960s, after the Korean War, we've been a declining organization in terms of the size. It wasn't until 2005, when we actually went 180 degrees in the other direction, that we were expanding, and we've continued in that direction.

I must admit there was not a lot of investment and attention paid to recruitment. The Canadian Forces could sort of sit back and rely on certain areas of the country to sustain what we needed at that point in time. In particular regions of the country, like Atlantic Canada, the prairies to some extent, Ontario and Quebec because of their size, and pockets of British Columbia were providing, essentially, a production of white males for the armed forces. What we have to pay a lot of attention to now is that it's estimated that by 2046, white Caucasians in this country will be in a minority, and it's extremely important for us to get out and expand the applicant pool to the diverse nature of what this country actually represents demographically.

So regional focus is extremely important to us, and I didn't want that to be—

•(1615)

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you. I appreciate that, Admiral. It's duly noted.

It's much like our police services, our fire services. If we want people to feel like they really are first-class Canadians, then make sure they're reflected in the way we run the country.

I appreciate very much hearing that.

My colleagues have raised concerns about language issues. I'd like to move to a gender issue. There was a disturbing article in *Maclean's* in May, and there have been other reports of potential harassment of female recruits and that the dropout rate of women is much higher. In fact, from 1989 to 1996, 32% of women dropped out of the army, both voluntarily and involuntarily, compared to 11.9% for men. And in 1996—I guess those are the latest statistics available for this article—15% of women and 8% of men.... I don't want to get into the details. You know what I'm getting at.

Give me the assurances. I want to hear that these kinds of things are being addressed and that we're making sure our armed forces are as welcoming to women as they are to men.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I give you my word that it is.

The fact of the matter is that we do spend a lot of time focusing on minority groups within the Canadian Forces, whether they are visible minorities or within a minority group, being women. We are trying very hard to increase the proportion of the Canadian Forces beyond the 13% that we seemed to hit, and we're having trouble getting beyond that.

There are a lot of reasons for that. This is just my personal experience in talking to women in the Canadian Forces. They've become very defensive in reports such as the article in *Maclean's* and the way statistics might be used, but generally they are very happy with the way they are treated in the Canadian Forces.

Mr. David Christopherson: Let me just make sure I get a personal caveat in there. My young daughter is an air cadet. So I'm not only interested as a politician, but I'm interested as a dad.

Were you going to comment, Officer?

BGen Linda Colwell: I'm probably on the leading edge, and that's because I'm an old girl at this point within the Canadian Forces. I have not experienced this gender bias. Women are in all 103 occupations. They have been accepted as peers. At one time we had to prove we could do the job. At this point we are accepted just as men, that we can do the job. And we, like men, have to prove that we can do the job.

Mr. David Christopherson: Good. Thank you. Those are some of the assurances I was looking for.

Let me ask the obvious question, and answer it any way you please. I'm really not playing any kind of "gotcha" game here.

We're in the middle of a war. Obviously, it's more difficult to recruit. Could you comment on that for me? Let's get that issue on the table. I would think common sense dictates it's easier to recruit in peacetime than in wartime, and as we see on the news happening every day, that has to have an impact. How are you dealing with that?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: We've been tracking the situation very closely, because there was an anticipation that our mission in Afghanistan may have an impact on the number of applicants. To

this point in time, our applicants are up.... There doesn't appear to be any impact on what we're doing in Afghanistan. If anything, it appears to have increased interest in the Canadian Forces.

Roger, do you want to provide any details?

Cmdre Roger MacIsaac: Mr. Chairman, that is correct. It's actually too early to find out what the issue is with respect to Afghanistan and how it relates to applicants. Suffice it to say that we are at higher numbers at this time of the year than we were last time. Time will tell. We are tracking that and trying to make a correlation.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Christopherson.

Thank you very much, Admiral Pile and Commodore MacIsaac.

Mrs. Ratansi, for eight minutes.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Thank you all for being here.

I was fortunate this summer to visit the air force...the NORAD area as well. I was very pleased with the professionalism. I was very impressed with our uniformed men and women, and I am pleased that they are protecting me.

My question is this. In terms of the chart that we see on recruitment and retention, if I were to apply for a position, what is the timeframe within which I would be called for an interview?

• (1620)

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The process begins, of course, with an interest and with stating that interest at a recruiting centre by speaking, obviously, to a recruiter. What the recruiter will then do is inform you that you require certain information that is to be brought back to or provided to the recruiting centre so they can complete the formal application process. Once that information is in and the process starts, as I was mentioning earlier to Mr. Williams, we anticipate that if there are no medical issues or security screening issues, and if your paperwork is in order in terms of a credit check, a criminal background check, and education, so that you are educated to the level that you say you are, and so on, we should be able to make an offer to you, if there is a position open for the particular trade or occupation you're interested in, within five days of our actually confirming that information.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: I've had some young constituents who were interested in joining the military, but their parents were not born in Canada, so they had to wait for two or three years before they even got a response. Is it possible that security clearance takes that long?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: We have had a problem in the past with security clearances, and it has really been a function of capacity. We haven't had sufficient resources devoted to that task to do all the screening and clearances in a timely manner. We have put in extra resources and extra people, and we have actually changed some of the methods we're using for security screening to improve that process.

Two to three years sounds quite extraordinary, but in the past it was not uncommon for people to wait from six months to a year, depending on the circumstances of the particular case.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: In the presentation you made, you said that you would like to increase the force by 75,000. It appears that at the moment the forces have 61,740. That is the current size of the forces. You are projecting that it will increase by 12,000 or 13,000 people. How would you do that in four years, when according to the Auditor General's audit you haven't been able to recruit more than 1,000? In your strategic plan you say you would add 1,000. How do you project meeting that 13,000 target in four years?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: There might be some confusing information out there with respect to what our actual commitment to the government is at the moment. Our commitment is to achieve a regular force of 70,000 by the year 2010, and we are on track to do that. As I mentioned earlier, for total paid strength in the Canadian Forces, we just eclipsed 64,000. As we continue to recruit this year and in the coming years until 2010-11, we are on track to reach 70,000.

The government is committed to achieving a force size of 75,000 at some point in the future, but there has been no time limit set on that particular expansion size. We are going to work towards achieving 70,000 by 2010-11, and then we will continue to look, at that point, in terms of growth, towards 75,000.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: You are comfortable with an increase of 13,000 people, despite the fact that in your own strategic intake plan you think the force will increase by 1,000 per annum.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The recruiting measures we put in place now... As we start to develop the recruiting system and add people to our recruiting centres and to our training system, the entire system will need to be able to adapt and withstand the number of people coming into the Canadian Forces. Otherwise, we will run into the issue of people waiting a long period of time before they're trained and employed. Our entire system has to adapt to this force expansion.

Between now and 2010, we are going to increase that annual intake beyond 1,000 per year, as we are able to adapt our training system.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: That brings me to a question for the Auditor General.

You had indicated that the human resource department in the military does not have the wherewithal, or is not equipped, to recruit or retain those types of people. Do you agree that the retention the admiral has projected will be met? Do you know?

• (1625)

Ms. Sheila Fraser: Mr. Chair, I wish I could predict the future.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: No, but as an accountant, you're projecting.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Sheila Fraser: It's obvious that the Canadian Forces are putting a lot of attention on this, and they're changing their way of doing recruitment and retention, which is one of the main messages we were trying to bring out in this report—that with an increase in numbers, they had to change the way they were doing this.

It's obvious they are taking the first steps, but I think it will probably be up to us to come back in three or four years to see, have these changes actually given the expected results?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: How many minutes do I have? One minute.

Would you happen to have a ratio that's your comfort zone between recruitment and attrition? We understand that attrition has to take place, because as the personnel reach a certain level, they will probably leave the army. What is the comfort zone between recruitment and attrition that you feel is okay?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: That particular comfort zone changes as we get larger, because we will want to have a little more attrition, and as we continue to expand, we're going to bring in more people. Let's say, for example, that we are going to stay at 70,000, then obviously our recruiting intake has to come down a bit to a sustained level to meet our attrition expectations.

In the past, when we had less than 60,000 people in the regular force, we had a normal attrition rate of about 4,000 to 4,500. So to sustain the Canadian Forces, we needed to take in about 4,000 to 4,500. Right now, our target intake for this year is 6,428 for the end of March. That will allow us to grow by just over 900, and that number will continue to increase as we approach 2010.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: I have one statement I'd like to make, and you can reflect on it. As the theatre changes with the type of exercise the military is getting involved in, my concern is about the recruitment level. When I went to NORAD's facility, I think we had a very good sense that our soldiers had to go through a lot of training, mental training, etc., so they would never be trigger-happy.

I'll ask you the question later because my time is up.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Ratansi.

Mr. Sweet, for eight minutes.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Yes, welcome. It's always good to see you, Ms. Fraser.

Rear Admiral Pile, I want to begin with page 56 of the Auditor General's report, paragraphs 2.30 to 2.31, where the beginning sentence is, "We expected National Defence to have a policy to attract the required target populations." Then at the end of paragraph 2.31, it says, "National Defence needs a comprehensive plan to guide and co-ordinate national, regional, and local activities for attracting and recruiting applicants."

I have to say that during this meeting I've become kind of confused, because in paragraph 2.33 there's a target of 5,000, and then somehow we have a figure of 13,000 mixed in with the Auditor General's statement today. Now it's 64,000 that we're standing at and then 70,000 for 2010. Could you please tell me, is there a comprehensive plan now? To remove all doubt about the figures, is the target 6,000 more boots on the ground by 2010?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Mr. Chair, I think the confusion emanates first from having a government policy in 2005, and then we had a change of government. The policy continued, but it changed slightly, so we were going to grow even larger than first anticipated. At that point we were around 62,000, so that's where the 13,000 comes from—to grow to 75,000.

Right now, with the current policy, our target is to achieve 70,000 in the regular force by 2010. At that point in time, we're going to look at the situation to consider growing to 75,000 beyond 2010. Does this help clarify that portion?

Mr. David Sweet: It does.

Is there a robust comprehensive plan now, as the Auditor General mentioned in her report? Is that in place today? Are you still working on it?

• (1630)

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Yes, that is part of our comprehensive plan. We know what our intake requirements are from now until 2010. If we continue to grow to 70,000—under a smart growth plan, where we can actually take in, train, and absorb the people we anticipate recruiting—we already have statistical models in place to deal with this, and we have a very comprehensive national recruiting attractions plan to achieve those goals.

Mr. David Sweet: Okay. Can this committee get a copy of the smart growth plan you're talking about?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Most certainly. In fact, I will provide to this committee our national recruiting attractions plan as well as our strategic guidance on national recruiting, which is just about to be signed by the Chief of the Defence Staff.

Mr. David Sweet: Very good.

Either clear up a rumour for me or answer a tough question. Is it true that after someone enlists in the reserves and serves, if they want to enlist in the regular service, they actually have to go down to a recruiting office and enlist just like someone who comes in off the street? Is that true?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: That used to be the case. That is no longer the case.

Mr. David Sweet: That's been fixed now?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: That's been fixed.

Mr. David Sweet: So what would be the timing for the transition from a reserve unit to regular force if someone applied today?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: If their unit got their papers in order, the time should be just five days for a component transfer.

Mr. David Sweet: It would be five days because they've already gone through medical and security, etc.?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Exactly.

Mr. David Sweet: I have spent some time as well on HMCS *Montreal* and HMCS *Halifax*, and I was quite impressed. I was impressed by the bilingualism on the ships, although on those two particular ships orders were given in English, but there was plenty of conversation in both languages.

On the way back from certifying the weapons in the Atlantic, the ship was commanded on the bridge by a female officer. There was such a degree of professionalism in every rank. I have to say also that in all three messes I was spoken to very frankly about how they felt about things. However, the officers' mess was much more diplomatic, and we'll save that kind of language for later.

I noticed that there was a good sharing program, and I want to know whether that is going to be able to tide you over in the gaps.

There is a sharing program for medics and doctors. In fact, on those two ships, the medics who were being supplied for that manoeuvre were from the army. Is that one of the ways you're trying to fill the gaps? Is that going to be enough?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: What you witnessed on board the ship was a principle of Canadian Forces integration. There are certain occupations, such as those in the medical or logistics fields, that actually serve a common purpose throughout the Canadian Forces, regardless of the colour of the uniform. They can serve in any number of units in any organization, whether it's in the army, the navy, or the air force. We call them common support trades or common support occupations.

That's what you witnessed on board the ship. It wasn't a matter of sharing. Those individuals were actually trained in that particular occupation and could be posted anywhere.

Mr. David Sweet: I understand 106% of your 2005 target was reached. Did you reduce any of your professional standards at all to achieve that overachievement?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: None of our qualification standards were touched.

Mr. David Sweet: I have one last question. I was going to question you about a spike in recruitment that I'd heard about through the national media, and you said that it's too early to tell. But do you have any kind of evidence as to why there is this spike in the province of Quebec, and does that make up the vast majority of the increase in recruitment right now?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: It probably is too early to tell. I don't even know if Commodore MacIsaac would have anything further to add, Mr. Chair, but we're very pleased with the response. It may have something to do with the attention the Canadian Forces is getting both in the media, with the additional advertising, and also through our national recruiting attractions plan.

We're focusing on those regions on which we traditionally did not place a lot of emphasis before. We had focused there but just not to the extent that we are focusing now.

Mr. David Sweet: Good. But you are analyzing that to find—

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Oh, absolutely. We're trying to find out.

Mr. David Sweet: —whatever evidence there might be to be able to capitalize on the opportunity to nourish that along.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Yes, we are. Yes, absolutely.

• (1635)

Mr. David Sweet: Good.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Sweet, and thanks very much, Admiral Pile.

That, colleagues, concludes the initial round. We're going to start round two at this point in time. The time for the questions goes from eight minutes to five minutes. We're going to start with Monsieur Proulx.

Monsieur Proulx, cinq minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Adm. Pile, I would like to raise a point concerning the cadets. I am a strong supporter of these three initiatives in my riding and in my region. I think it's a wonderful opportunity for young people.

I would like to know if you have any statistics to indicate how many of these young people who belong to various cadet corps end up having a career in the armed forces.

[*English*]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I don't know if I have the statistics resident here today, but Commodore MacIsaac did work as director general for the reserves and cadets. I will pass the microphone to him, with the chair's permission, in a moment.

What I do want to say is that I know for a fact that we get a lot of interest from those young men and women who have served in the three cadet corps, army, navy and air. If you ask any one of us, I'm sure you would probably see a representative ratio of interest among the people who have actually applied to the Canadian Forces and enrolled.

I was an air cadet at a much younger age. and I believe, Commodore MacIsaac, you were too. No?

But I know a lot of my colleagues were in the cadet organizations across the Canadian Forces, where they first got that taste of military life and military lifestyle and some of the things they might be doing later on. It is a great youth organization, and I'm very pleased we have such great support across the country for it.

Do you want to add some of the numbers?

Cmdre Roger MacIsaac: Mr. Chairman, there are approximately 1,130 cadet corps across Canada, just about in every area, even in the north. It is a youth program that is specifically identified and run by the Department of National Defence as a corporate structure, with corporate funding. It is a youth program.

The goals, of course, are to build better Canadians, to enhance the feeling of being Canadian, to provide confidence to individuals, and of course to hone some of their skills with respect to public speaking, or whatever. The objective, however, is not specifically to condition people to join the Canadian Forces. And we do not keep that statistic; we never did. But as the Admiral pointed out, a large number of kids, or a good portion of those who start off in cadets, for whatever interest—normally with some association, having a father, a relative, or whomever, who's served in the cadets or military—do go forward. But we have not kept that statistic.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: You said that partial funding for the cadet corps was provided by the Department of National Defence but that funding is an ongoing problem. Children are constantly involved in fundraising, by selling chocolate bars, having bake sales, selling tickets, and so on.

I know that fundraising can be considered good training, but our governments should find alternate funding for the cadet corps, if only to make things easier for them.

Can you tell me, Adm. Pile, what type of profile is required—and I'm not referring to any professional qualifications—to join the armed forces?

[*English*]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The first thing I'd like to see in a recruit is a proud Canadian who supports the values we have in this country and who wants to promote those values across Canada, and abroad as well. Those are the types of qualities you will see in most people who wear this uniform.

The second thing is that we are looking for an educated, well rounded, physically fit, and adventurous individual, because a lot of what we do requires those qualities in order to be successful in the Canadian Forces.

I would just summarize it by saying we look for an individual with those qualities to start with.

There are many opportunities for us, once they join the Canadian Forces, to improve and build upon those qualities so they become whatever they want to be in this organization.

• (1640)

Mr. Marcel Proulx: If I may, you were talking of education. What would be the minimum?

The Chair: Mr. Pile.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I believe it's grade 10. For some of the occupations the minimum education requirement is grade 10.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Thank you.

The Chair: *Merci beaucoup, Monsieur Proulx.*

Thank you very much, Admiral Pile.

Mr. Fitzpatrick, for five minutes.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): I just want to comment that there were some people, now deceased, from Cumberland House who were well-decorated people in the Canadian armed forces. I think they were a long shot from having their grade 10, but I'll have to double-check on that. They were real war heroes from World War II.

I want to zero in on the aboriginal recruitment issue, because I have a very high first nations population in my riding. I was at a powwow a number of years ago, and I think four young aboriginals who were in the armed forces were being recognized at the powwow. Three of them were in the American armed forces. My read on their careers was that they were in it for the long term. I think one of them even had some stripes, so they'd moved up.

I had a discussion with them after the ceremonies, with their parents involved. Some of the comments were interesting. One that came up from one set of parents—it's too bad Mr. Proulx is not here now—was that they actually thought that the language requirements would impair their ability in the Canadian armed forces. That was one of the reasons they'd moved to the American armed forces. They were bilingual, Cree and English, but they weren't francophone.

I'm not quite clear on what the situation is inside the Canadian armed forces in terms of language. If you reach the officer class and so on, would you have to be functionally bilingual? Is that the requirement in the armed forces?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The requirement in the armed forces is that in order to be promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel or commander, you have to be functionally bilingual in both official languages.

In terms of the comments you made, I mentioned earlier our interest in reaching out to our diverse cultural communities across Canada. We are also very interested in our aboriginal, first nations, Métis communities across the country.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick: That's the other thing I was going to follow up on. I thought it was most unusual that out of that community, three out of four of the people they were honouring were in the American armed forces. To my recollection, just from talking with them, in the aboriginal community it is not unusual to be in the American armed forces. I read articles subsequent to that, I think, that basically would give the impression that there's a disproportionately high number of aboriginal Canadians in the American armed forces and who are being recruited by the American armed forces.

Admiral, perhaps you can enlighten me on what the situation is here. Have I got it wrong, and there isn't a large number of Canadian first nations in the American armed forces?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I can't speak to the actual statistics, because I don't know—

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick: Could you find them? Do you have access to that information?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I can certainly give you what the aboriginal representation is in the Canadian Forces, but I would be unable to tell you how many Canadian aboriginals are serving in the United States armed forces. That's their privacy...unless they actually had it recorded in their personnel statistics and released it to us.

• (1645)

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick: There's no way of tracking that?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I could certainly ask for it.

We are aware that our first nations Canadians are targeted by specifically the United States Marine Corps, I think, and word does get around that there's an opportunity there. But we want to make that opportunity here in Canada, so we intend to start to reach out to all of the aboriginal communities.

I'm not sure if you're aware, but we have diversity outreach offices that started about three years ago. We opened up a diversity outreach office in Surrey, British Columbia, for the Indo-Canadian community there. We subsequently opened an office in Richmond, British Columbia.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick: I would also suggest that if it can be statistically proven that there's a large number in the American armed forces, our armed forces should look at how we can reach those people and try to get them back into our armed forces, where they should have been in the first place. That's just a suggestion on my part.

I know of some professional medical-type people, like dentists, who have gone through these programs. With one in particular, I know the armed forces paid for all of their education to become a dentist. I would have thought it was kind of like a no-cut, one-way, long-term contract in the world of sports, because there were a lot of

benefits to the person who was in the program. But my recollection is that a few years after they were out practising dentistry, they bought their way out of this contract. I thought it was a rather low price to be able to get out of the program.

I guess we live in a free country, but it seems to me that if people are going to get their education paid for and get all the benefits of those professional careers, we should make sure they are tied down for a pretty good period of time.

How does the armed forces deal with that issue?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: With professions where the Canadian Forces actually pays for someone's tuition, such as a dentist or a doctor, we have what is called obligatory service for the years we put them through school. You have to remember that we have to strike a balance between actually attracting that applicant to the Canadian Forces and a term or obligatory service to the extent which they would still want to become a member of the Canadian Forces and not feel they were going to be locked into something that gave them no flexibility whatsoever.

I like to believe that from here on in they're going to enjoy their work in the Canadian Forces so much that we can keep them on longer. That's not always the case, but we certainly attempt to do that.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Fitzpatrick.

Thank you, Admiral Pile.

Monsieur Nadeau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Adm. Pile, you said that having French as one's mother tongue does not represent an obstacle to joining Canada's Armed Forces. Does that apply from coast-to-coast?

[*English*]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Yes. At all of the Canadian Forces recruiting centres you can be recruited in either language.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: So, if an individual in Saskatoon, for example, wants to go through the recruitment process in French, there would be no problem? He would be able to go into the army, the air force or the navy, and could stay close to the area where he signed up. Is that correct?

[*English*]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: It doesn't matter where. In all Canadian Forces organizations, units, formations, where there is a service being provided, especially our recruiting centres, that service can be provided in either official language.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: If I understand what you are saying, that person would be able to receive training in French from the day he joins the army until the day he retires.

[English]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: There are some limitations on training courses as one progresses through the Canadian Forces. We are attempting to address that and increase the number of bilingual instructors so we can provide as much training as possible in both official languages.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: So there are grey areas, places where that would not be possible.

• (1650)

[English]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: That is correct.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Now let's talk about retention in the armed forces. When these men and women become parents, are they able to enrol their children in a school where French is the main language? I don't mean French as a second language or an immersion program. Do the armed forces provide them with assignments in areas that would allow them to send their children to French school, to learn their language?

[English]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: It's truly a function of the ability of that provincial system to be able to support it. I know that across the country—and for an example, my own children were able to attend French immersion at all the postings we experienced—most of the cities and towns that Canadian Forces personnel are posted to can support the immersion.

As for a true French language school, I don't—

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Do you understand the difference between the word "immersion" and "French as a first language"? As far as we are concerned, immersion programs are a type of assimilation, whereas when we speak about French as the primary language, we are speaking about the language of the culture.

What you are saying is that, depending on where he is assigned, a member of Canada's Armed Forces will not necessarily be able to educate his children primarily in French.

[English]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I can't completely answer that question because I'm uncertain what provincial regions provide; that's the provincial responsibility.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you.

There are often schools located on military bases, but in Moose Jaw, for example, the service is provided off base. The children must travel to Regina to attend Monseigneur de Laval School, whereas in Bagotville, there are schools for those whose first language is English.

So, the way I see it, soldiers whose first language is French are being discriminated against.

[English]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I think the Canadian Forces in general makes every effort to accommodate the language needs of the children of their members, to the extent that it is possible. I can't cite for you any specific situations. For the time that I've been chief of military personnel and for the time that I've been in this organization, I certainly cannot recall situations where we had issues with respect to the parents of families who had difficulty seeking language instruction, or that—

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you.

I don't mean to be rude, but I must continue because we are short of time. I would like to ask about the courses that a member of the armed forces must take in order to be promoted. I think you addressed this earlier. If someone wants a promotion, there must be a specific course to prepare for the next rank, and I am not familiar with all of the levels. If this member experiences difficulty in understanding the other official language—in this case, English—his career might be stalled, since the Canadian army cannot provide him with the necessary courses in the French language.

[English]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I think I mentioned earlier that there's a requirement to achieve functional bilingualism at the rank of lieutenant colonel and commander. If they do not achieve a functional profile at that rank level, they will certainly be restricted from advancing. They have to maintain a certain level of bilingualism within the Canadian Forces.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Nadeau.

[English]

Thank you very much, Admiral Pile.

Mr. Lake, five minutes.

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): General Pile, I appreciate you coming.

I appreciate all of you coming today.

You commented on a competitive labour market. Coming from Alberta, and with my other committee being human resources, I can certainly appreciate the challenges you have right now.

Now, taking a look at exhibit 2.4 on page 54 of the Auditor General's report, if you were to draw a trend line from, say, years zero to three and down to the top of, say, years fifteen to twenty, there's a significant space below that trend line in years four to thirteen, and particularly, of course, as identified in years nine to thirteen. If you were to pump those numbers up in years nine to thirteen to meet the trend line, you would have approximately 13,000 more members of the regular force. That is precisely the number the Auditor General says you now have plans to increase to.

Can you comment on what happened between 1993 and 1997 that caused that shortfall? It seems to be that the urgent problems you're having aren't a result of what you're doing now, but they are a result of what happened in that time span.

• (1655)

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The period of time you're referring to was when there were a number of government reductions across the board. The Canadian Forces also shared in those reductions. One of the most efficient means at the time was to reduce people. What they did was what's called a force reduction plan, where a number of members of the Canadian Forces had an opportunity to retire or exit earlier than planned. A number of people took that option. That's what we call that force reduction plan bubble.

Mr. Mike Lake: That you talked about earlier?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Mike Lake: In conjunction with the force reduction plan, it would have been pretty simple for someone to just look at a graph like this and identify that, down the road, this was what it was going to look like, given those plans. Can you tell me what the plans were at the time, the long-term vision fifteen years out from that time point? Obviously someone would have had to envision that we would be in this situation now if they took fifteen minutes to look at a graph like this. Can you elaborate on that?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: One would like to think that, but that's not the case. During the period of the nineties, I think we were lucky to look ahead for a couple of years. There was no anticipation that we were going to turn around and expand the Canadian Forces in 2005. We were certainly aware that it was going to be a challenge at some point in the future should we have to expand. But when it was going to happen or which government was going to support force expansion for whatever reason, like changing geopolitical circumstances, those things would not have been predictable back then. As I said earlier, we were in a slow state of decline since the early 1960s, right up until 2005.

Mr. Mike Lake: It seems, though, that we're really not talking about an overall expansion per se, as much as we're talking about just playing catch-up right now to get back to where we were at that time, to the 1993 level. It's not like we're massively expanding the military, other than to play catch-up right now. Is that accurate?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: This is all based on a foundation of defence policy and what force structures are required to deliver on those capabilities to meet the policy. Right now, work is ongoing on a defence capabilities plan. We will match our force structure in accordance with meeting the missions that are a result of essentially a capabilities plan or defence policy.

Mr. Mike Lake: Is there a specific plan in place now to ensure that this doesn't happen in the future, a long-term plan?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: We are entirely dependent upon what support we receive and what direction we receive from the government.

Mr. Mike Lake: I'm just changing gears a little bit. I have a question regarding the reasons for people not so much dropping out, but not making it through the process, with 12% failing the physical fitness test. These are people who are willing, but they're just not physically able to participate due to fitness levels, not medical problems. Is anything being done to offer these potential recruits the

opportunity to whip themselves into shape and live their dream to be members of the forces?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: With the youth in Canada today, it's quite an interesting phenomenon we're dealing with. What we've experienced in the Canadian Forces is a higher than normal rate of failure for physical fitness. As you know, to be a member in the Canadian Forces, you must be physically fit.

Instead of having the physical fitness test during the recruitment phase—another way of speeding up the process, by the way—we've taken that physical fitness test and moved it to just prior to basic training for both officers and non-commissioned members. When they do the test on arrival at the training centre, they will take one of two routes. If they pass the test, they will continue on with their basic training. If they fail the test and it's obvious they're going to need some remedial physical fitness training, we have adopted a mentoring approach to these individuals and they have up to ninety days to get themselves physically fit, with our help, with our encouragement, and also an opportunity to catch up on some other areas of training.

One of the unique things we discovered when that was not in place was that after about four to six weeks of basic training, an individual's cardiovascular system would start to improve and catch up. However, at about the nine- to eleven-week point, the frame—the bones, the tendons—would start to break down because of the very sedentary lifestyle adopted by much of our youth. We were having an extraordinary number of injuries, with some of those injuries going unreported because they were so close to the end of their training. When they finally reported them after training, we were in a position where some of them had to undergo significant rehabilitation or release because they were no longer meeting our universality-of-service principles for service in the Canadian Forces.

That's a long-winded answer, but, yes, we're very aware of the fitness issue in the Canadian Forces, and we're working toward developing a lifelong commitment to fitness and health.

• (1700)

The Chair: Thanks very much, Mr. Lake, Admiral Pile.

Mr. Christopherson, for five minutes.

Mr. David Christopherson: Thank you very much, Chair.

I'm not going to belabour it, but I just want to revisit once more the issue of female recruits. Are the dropout rates the same right now for men and women?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I don't know.

Do we know whether the rates are the same for women as for men?

I'll have to get back to you on that, Mr. Christopherson.

Mr. David Christopherson: If you would, please, and if there's any difference in the time span you're covering, I'd be very interested.

I am curious. Which of the three arms...? How do you refer to it—as a branch? The army, navy...?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Technically we refer to them as the three environments.

Mr. David Christopherson: Which of the three environments is the most challenging for recruits?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: They all have their challenges, but the least challenged is the air force.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. David Christopherson: You're going to have fun with that for a long time. You know that.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: People love to join the air force, and we have a lot of reasons why, internally.

But the army and the navy, I believe, are similarly challenged, because the army and the navy traditionally are known for deploying for long periods of time, and there are certain hardships endured at sea and hardships endured in the army, based on most of the occupations in those environments. There's been a traditional trend to not having any issues with recruiting for the air force, but certainly a trend towards having difficulties recruiting for the army and the navy.

Mr. David Christopherson: Has any of that changed over the last few years?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Not really, no; it's been pretty much standard for some time.

Mr. David Christopherson: Okay.

Explain to me again, just in very straightforward terms, how it is that we have recruited 20,000 recruits since 2002 but only 700 are effective trained forces.

Is that the right term—ETF? I see a couple of different terms in here, but you know what I mean.

There are 20,000 recruited, but there are only 700 who are actually soldiers, as one would think of them, out on the front lines. Explain to me again why those numbers are so different.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The Auditor General's report is factually correct, and it's an accurate reflection of what happened. But do you remember I talked about the personnel system—so many leaving as so many come in? Well, every year, we lose about 4,000 to 5,000 people through attrition.

Mr. David Christopherson: And that's going to increase as the years go on, I understand.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: That will get larger as we have a larger Canadian Forces.

It's also what we are mandated to do. During the period of time that's reflected in the Auditor General's report we were not mandated to expand; we were mandated to sustain the numbers we had. I think we were actually mandated to grow by about 200 a year, and that's exactly what we did. I think we ended up with 700, and mathematically we should have ended up with about 600. So the 20,000 we brought in showed an actual net increase of the numbers we were targeted to achieve.

Mr. David Christopherson: Is that an unusual number for any other national armed forces that we might be comparable to? I know they're all very different. It's just that it seems like such a huge number. I know you gave the reasons, but 20,000 incoming and only 700...and that's over a period of five years.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: But you see, if we're losing 4,000 to 5,000 a year, that's 20,000 out. So the net increase is about 700 over that period.

Mr. David Christopherson: But now you've had two expansions since you were at that number, right? In the last two years, there have been goals to reach higher. How many are you going to have to take in, in raw numbers, given all your variables, to come out with the number you need to meet not just sustainability but the increased targets? What's that raw number going to have to be?

• (1705)

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Last year, the raw number was 5,527—you have to love modellers and statisticians—and this year the number is 6,428. So you see that we're going up.

Mr. David Christopherson: But where do you need to get to, Admiral? What number do you need to get to and stay at, over what period of time, to achieve what you believe you're going to need in the foreseeable future?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Our target goal is 70,000 in the year 2010.

Mr. David Christopherson: I understand. And how many recruits are you going to have to take in, in raw numbers? I'm trying to get a sense of how many Canadians we have to get at the one end going into the system to actually have soldiers—boots on the ground, if you will.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: *Grosso modo*, we have four years to go. Multiply that by 6,000 and it's about 24,000.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Christopherson.

Thank you, Admiral Pile.

Mrs. Ratansi, you have five minutes, followed by Mr. Williams.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: I'd like to carry on with the question I asked previously, and on that you gave a response to a previous questioner. You're mandated to do certain things, and with the change in geopolitics and in what nature brings you—it brings you disaster, tsunamis, earthquakes, etc.—the military has been very responsive. Now the geopolitics have changed and you're going into different theatres.

My question is, how do you guarantee that you will have good recruits, if you need to increase to a force of 70,000? You have gone through a lot of training. When the theatre changes, it is important that you get the right calibre of people who are not trigger-happy, etc. I know you go through a lot of processes. How will you ensure, with this demand for getting different types of soldiers, that you will maintain that quality control?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I think you're referring to the instruments and tools we use to assess aptitude and—

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mental stability.... Yes.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: We're looking for all of those things. We have a process in place to adapt and continually look at the tools and instruments we're using to assess candidates for the Canadian Forces. It was actually a point noted in the report that we need to improve upon. We've taken that point and we shall improve upon it. We have measures in place to monitor closely what requirements we need now and for the future.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: My concern has been, and the underlying theme, probably, of questioning you has been, why aren't we increasing our military, and why are you taking so long? I am being more cautious and saying I would like you to take your time. When I met with the soldiers—the NORAD soldiers, the British soldiers, the Canadian soldiers—they said, “We would never be trigger-happy.” We do not want a recruitment system where we can risk our lives or the lives of our soldiers if we are not careful. I just want to ensure that we have quality assurance in the system.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I started just discussing the first phase, and that is actually joining the Canadian Forces. After that, as you're well aware, we go through very rigorous training and indoctrination into the Canadian Forces. Part of that indoctrination is self-discipline, responsibility, and leadership. We provide opportunities throughout their careers for self-improvement and professional development, as I think you would have witnessed with the people you met in uniform. We devote a lot of attention to that in our training system, to make sure we are sending the right people with the right qualifications, abroad or here in Canada.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: My last question, because I'm sure I'll be running out of time, is this. With this changing environment that we have, what is your greatest need? Is it the competence? Is it the air force? Is it navy? What are your first priorities? Is it doctors and engineers? Who is it that you need fast?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: There are a number of occupations where we are experiencing difficulty in getting the numbers we'd like. Naval technicians has historically been a very difficult area, and it continues to be. Those qualifications that we seek are sought out by everybody, in the private sector as well.

Doctors are a sort of good news story. We've made some significant strides targeting specifically, and just being a lot smarter in how we're recruiting doctors and getting the word out.

One of the areas where we are desperately short at the moment is pharmacists. The competition for pharmacists in the private sector is extreme.

● (1710)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: I'd just like to commend you. One of the heads of the DART team that went to Pakistan yesterday received the Star of Sacrifice from the Pakistan government. Congratulations.

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Thank you, Ma'am.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Next will be Mr. Williams, and that will conclude the second and final round.

Mr. John Williams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm looking at the Auditor General's exhibit 2.1. There are a couple of areas here where she says progress has been “unsatisfactory given the significance and complexity of the issue and the time

that has elapsed since the recommendation was made”. And the bottom one is, “The Department should ensure that its human-resource management information is accurate and up-to-date.”

She's given you a failing grade on that one, Admiral Pile. Can we have comments, please?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I can't recall exactly which information was not “accurate and up to date”, but we make every effort to ensure that our information is accurate and up to date.

One of the things we rely on is our own human resources management system. It's one of the areas we intend to improve upon in the Canadian Forces in the future. It's going to require investment to move from obsolescence into a modern personnel management system, but we are working towards that goal.

Mr. John Williams: The other complaint she had, or the unsatisfactory grade she gave to you, was for keeping us informed. You've kept us in the dark. “Performance measures should be in place...and the results included in the departmental performance report to Parliament.”

I've put a great deal of emphasis, as I've said in this committee, on ensuring that departmental performance reports contain all the information we need in order to assist you, if you have problems; to provide more money, if you don't have enough money; to understand your needs and concerns and problems; as well as to give you an opportunity to tell us your successes. But it is two sides of the same coin.

Madam Auditor General, do you have any comments on these two unsatisfactory grades you've given to them?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: On the question of systems, Mr. Chair, I understand the department has three different systems that we looked at, and they all had different data. It wasn't clear to us which ones were the most accurate. Ms. Loschiuk might elaborate further if the committee wishes.

Performance reporting I think is an issue that's probably common to many departments, especially with the increases that have been announced. It will be important I think for parliamentarians to be able to know the progress that's being made on overall numbers, but also, we would suggest, on certain target groups, and on the representation, for example, of visible minorities, women, and aboriginals. Parliamentarians, I would hope, would be interested in getting that kind of tracking going forward.

Mr. John Williams: Thank you. Perhaps we can elaborate on that when we write our report.

You mentioned you were taking pride in your attrition level being quite low. I have a situation in my constituency right now. A member of the armed forces has contacted me. He wants to get into the private sector. He has a job in the private sector, but he's not being released from his six-months' notice contract. There was a letter from the minister saying, no, you signed on and you're not getting released until you've done your six months. So how many people are asking to get released from the military and being denied based on the fact that they have a contract to stay?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: I can't give you a categorical number, but we do have a policy in place in the Canadian Forces that if an individual is required for operations, we have the option of extending. Normally for most people who request a voluntary release, we try to get them out within thirty days. If that's not possible because they are required for an operational commitment, then they are required for an operational commitment, and they signed on for that.

Mr. John Williams: You mentioned the dearth of pharmacists as the most pressing issue you have. Does your pay scale flexibility allow you enough flexibility to offer additional incentives in financial pay, if that's what it takes to recruit these people?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Pay is always a difficult one, because sometimes it's difficult for us in the Canadian Forces to keep up with the private sector in terms of pay alone. We try to look at a more comprehensive package in order to attract individuals to the Canadian Forces and actually, once they're in, to keep them there.

In the case of pharmacists, we are looking at enhancing the allowances for pharmacists in terms of training and education, and through other means. I can't give the specific details, but I would certainly be able to forward those to you in the future.

• (1715)

Mr. John Williams: I represent a riding just on the edge of the Edmonton garrison, Edmonton—St. Albert. There's a hospital in St. Albert, which a number of years ago had doctors and nurses from the military working in it to ensure that they had experience, because there were no wartime problems at that time. Now things are different. In your hospital service, are you able to engage the doctors to provide the assistance that our military personnel coming back with wounds require? We hear of so many people going to Germany, to the American hospital there, as a first line from Afghanistan, and then coming back here. Do we have the skills within the armed forces to provide what they need?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: In those cases in which we do not have the skills, we have a very strong relationship with civilian hospitals. There is an ongoing commitment that we have through our director general of health services to establish those relationships. We've had extraordinary support from our civilian hospitals across the country in dealing with some of the cases that we've had as a result of injuries and wounds sustained in Afghanistan.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Williams, and thank you, Admiral Pile.

Monsieur Laforest, you have a brief point of clarification you want to make?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: I wish I had enough time to ask a few more questions.

Admiral, I would like to come back to paragraph 2.66, to which Ms. Fraser referred. The Auditor General stated that the Assistant Deputy Minister—Military Human Resources was responsible for coordinating the management of human resources but that this authority was not being enforced. We know that respect for authority is of utmost importance in the armed forces, yet this lack of respect seems to be accepted.

What is your reaction to this statement? Is this deputy minister a member of the military? Is this an important issue?

[*English*]

RAdm Tyrone Pile: The deputy minister being referred to is actually me. It's just that there has been a name change. What used to be the assistant deputy minister of human resources military—quite a mouthful—is now chief of military personnel.

I'm pleased to report that at the same time the Auditor General was finalizing that report, we had, in the Canadian Forces, as some of you may have heard, the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Hillier, talk about Canadian Forces transformation. Part of that whole transformation process includes human resources systems transformation. In November 2005 the armed forces counsel and the Chief of the Defence Staff fully endorsed an improved full accountability and authority to be invested for the entire Canadian Forces personnel system in one individual responsible to the Chief of the Defence Staff. That individual is me.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I don't have any questions.

First of all, I want to thank you, Ms. Fraser, and your staff for being here.

I certainly thank you, Admiral Pile, and your colleagues for being here. It is an honour for us to have you here. We certainly offer you our support, our encouragement, and, on behalf of all Canadians, our thanks.

Before we conclude, do you have any closing remarks, Mrs. Fraser?

Ms. Sheila Fraser: I'd just like to say, Chair, that we were very pleased to note there was satisfactory progress on the concerns we had raised in 2002, and also that the Canadian Forces have agreed with our recommendations and have started to take certain actions on that. I hope when we return in four or five years that we will also note satisfactory progress then.

The Chair: Admiral Pile, do you have any closing remarks you want to address to the committee?

RAdm Tyrone Pile: Yes, sir.

Thank you very much for inviting us here today. I appreciate very much the vocal and evident support for the Canadian Forces from the members of the committee. Also, although it might sound strange, I actually welcome the Auditor General's return to come and check up on us to see how we've done with the numerous investments and initiatives that are in place today. We'll continue to invest and put into place other initiatives in the near future. I think they will see a very positive result as an outcome.

These are very trying times in the Canadian Forces with the mission in Afghanistan, while at the same time we are transforming and we are also growing. That has put a lot of pressure on all of the individuals in uniform, and I thank you again for your support.

• (1720)

The Chair: Again, I want to thank everyone for being here.

For committee members, we are meeting Thursday at 3:15. At that point we'll be in camera discussing reports.

The meeting is adjourned.

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