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Chair

Mr. Rob Anders

Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC)): I call to order yet another session of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Today we have as our witness Lieutenant-Colonel Matthias F. Reibold, and he's the defence attaché for the embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, based here in Ottawa.

Sir, just before you present, I'm going to give you some idea of what we're up to and then hand the floor over to you.

Mr. Gaudet, you do not have interpretation? Okay, we're having technical issues.

I could just try to conduct the meeting, but I don't think we'll be allowed to do that, so we're going to suspend for five minutes or so until we have the technician arrive. I apologize.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1535)

The Chair: I apologize to my French colleagues for what is transpiring today, but it is a technical glitch; it's certainly no omission of intention. So we'll just have to wait for the technician and we'll do the best we can.

Now, of course, to our German guest, I think you're well apprised of the nature of our study. The way it generally works is that we give our witnesses 20 minutes to present—I'm assuming that is what they told you today—and then after that we have a prearranged selection in terms of how the questions come up from the various parties.

Sir, at this stage we will turn the floor over to you, and my Bloc colleagues will do the best they can with regard to translation.

Lieutenant-Colonel Matthias Reibold (Defence Attaché, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany): Honourable members of the Canadian Parliament, I am Lieutenant Colonel Matthias Reibold. I'm the defence attaché of the Federal Republic of Germany to Canada.

It is today a great pleasure and an honour for me to speak in front of you about German so-called veterans affairs.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, honourable members of the Canadian Parliament.

My name is lieutenant-colonel Matthias Reibold and I hold the position of Defence Attaché of Germany. It is a great honour for me to appear before you today. I know that you are bilingual, but my French is very poor. That is the reason why I will speak to you in English only.

● (1545)

[*English*]

Let me start with the conscripts. A conscript in Germany earns €7.50 per day, an equivalent of $12 Canadian. He gets free food, drinks, accommodation, and equipment and he can travel free on public transport between his home address and his barracks. If he is married, he earns additional money, his flat will be paid by the forces, and he has access to free military health service. If he suffers from an injury that he got during his time of duty, he has free military medical service for up to an additional three months after his term of nine months ends. If he becomes handicapped, he receives a basic pension adjusted to the grade of his disability. In some cases, he may get a one-time compensation—for example, if he's doing a dangerous job like parachuting. If he dies from an accident, his wife gets a widow pension, and his children receive an orphan pension. Also, his parents can receive a parents pension if he has had to take care of them. Additionally, his job is safe. That means he will not lose it while he serves. All other contributions during that time, like health insurance, pension plan, and unemployment insurance, are paid during this time by our government.

Let me make clear that these conscripts will never take part in a mission abroad, like Afghanistan or Kosovo.

I'm coming to the second group. Those conscripts who are willing to serve on a voluntary basis for between 11 and 23 months have the same benefits as every conscript has. Let me explain that it is hard to find an adequate term for these conscripts. I will call them temporary career volunteers. In addition, this soldier earns money in the same way as a regular soldier does, in accordance with his current rank. Those soldiers go on missions abroad. If they suffer an injury during this time of duty, they have free military medical services for at least three years after the time they serve.

While they are serving abroad, three things could happen to such a soldier. First, he could be hijacked or put in captivity. If this happens, he will earn all his money for as long this situation lasts as well as an extra benefit afterwards for what he has suffered. Those who have suffered from severe injuries caused by incidents while they are fulfilling their duties abroad receive a compensation of up to €80,000. If his life, body, or health insurance will not pay because of the war risk clause, the German forces cover up to €250,000.

The third group includes those conscripts who serve for several periods of time, from two years to 20 years. I will call them regular or non-career soldiers. They have the same benefits as the before-mentioned conscripts do. In addition, they receive a full salary, and their equipment is provided them for free. They also have access to free military medical services. For their families, the health costs are paid up to 80% by the forces. If they have to move, it is paid. They get a card that allows them to travel for 50% of the normal cost. If they are separated from their families, every other two weeks the costs for driving or flying home are covered.

The main benefit for these regulars is the care they get when their time ends in the military. After their time has ended, they get extra money, further training, and paid education. Depending on the length of time they served, this can be from seven months to five years after their time of duty has finished. This could be for study at a university or taking an apprenticeship. They receive 75% of their last salary, and the full cost of any educational training is covered. A soldier who has served for more than 12 years can also apply to serve in the government services. This is also regulated by law.

When these soldiers leave the forces, the costs for pension insurance, health insurance, unemployment insurance, and nursing insurance are paid retroactively, so that he or she has no disadvantage with respect to those who worked as civil employees. In case of death, the surviving dependants get all the money he would have received had he finished his contract.

I have to admit it is very difficult to translate specific German synonyms or vocabulary used in our typical bureaucratic language. As far as it is needed, I use expressions that describe the facts and are very usable for common understanding.

The German forces have transformed—and I think quite successfully—from forces to defend my country during the Cold War to forces that are able to fulfill missions worldwide within the context of the United Nations, European nations, and NATO. During this transformation, it was also necessary for us to adapt our laws dealing with the social and health coverage of all our soldiers.

All female and male German soldiers are an integral part of our political system. It is therefore our self-conception that they take part, like all other German citizens, in the common social benefits of our system. But different from other professional groups or categories, the job of a soldier is combined with additional strains and dangers. This makes it important that they have access to special benefits provided by the government. Also, this belongs to our self-conception of our society. This is the reason the German legislator cares, in particular, about the special situation of our soldiers. Therefore, we have adapted or renewed several laws, like the law for soldiers, the law of social benefits for soldiers, and also a relatively new law to help soldiers after they have suffered from an accident, injury, or death in mission.

I'd like to now give you a more detailed overview on this. First, I'd like to mention that we do not use the term “veterans” in Germany. This is because of our conscript system. At this time, every male citizen of my country has to serve for nine months in the German forces when he has reached the age of 18 years. As an alternative, those young men can do an alternative service as conscientious objectors. The total strength of our forces today is 240,000 soldiers.

We categorize our conscripts in five groups. The first group, the conscripts, as mentioned before, have to serve for nine months, and this service is only for male soldiers. Those conscripts later on—and this is the second group—can additionally serve between 11 and 23 months on a voluntary basis. The third group is conscripts who can serve from two years up to 20 years. This group is open to female and male soldiers. The fourth group is the conscripts serving as reservists, and the fifth group—the group I belong to—is made up of conscripts who have decided to become professional soldiers. Every soldier of this group has access to different benefits while they are serving or after they have served.

As for the reservists, all those who have served in those categories receive reservist status after the fact. This relationship as a reservist depends on the rank or status he achieved before he retired. He can be called up for several weeks per year or serve on a voluntary basis in missions abroad, for example. By doing this, he has the same rights as I have mentioned above and also the same duties as any other conscript. His job is also secure while he is serving or doing his reservist duties and he receives the difference between €7.50 per day and the income he normally receives, but only up to a certain income. You can imagine managers' salaries; we do not pay those high differences.

Regarding conscripts as professional soldiers, most conscripts deciding to serve as professional soldiers have to serve until the age of 61. Some of them have the right to retire at 56. They have the same benefits as mentioned above. After they retire, they receive a pension of 72% of their last income. If a professional is no longer able to fulfill his duties and must retire, it becomes a pension of between 66% and 72%, depending on his length of duty. A widow's pension is 60% monthly, and an orphan's pension is up to 30%. For example, as a lieutenant-colonel I have to work for 42 years because my retirement age is now 61.

Due to the dangers of missions, Germany passed a new law in 2007. This law manages how to deal with soldiers, functionaries, judges, and civil employees of our forces who suffered from severe injury. A severe injury is meant to have a grade of disability of more than 50%. This law defines several measures. The first is to become additionally qualified to compete as a disabled person with non-disabled persons to have a fair chance on the employee market. Also, all those conscripts previously mentioned in the different troops have the right to become professionals after they have suffered severe injuries in our forces. They will be employed by the forces.

In Germany we have a secretary of state or deputy minister who is responsible for veterans', reservists', or conscripts' affairs in Germany. Our ombudsman is also ordered by Parliament to ensure that all those legal affairs are being watched and controlled. We also have a general who is responsible for those affairs within the military.

To sum up, after 1999 we went to Kosovo on our first mission abroad. We realized we had to change a lot. Our bureaucracy was too complicated, no longer manageable, and we were faced with public pressure. As I mentioned before, those measures, especially the last one, give our soldiers and civilian employees the necessary coverage while they are on duty for their country.

This ends my short presentation. I am more than happy to take your questions now.

● (1550)

The Chair: *Danke.*

We will now go to the Liberal Party of Canada, and Mr. Russell, for seven minutes.

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, Lieutenant-Colonel Reibold. It's great to have you here. When we spoke earlier, I mentioned that one of the communities I represent is Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The German air force in particular and our community have had a strong relationship in terms of the training that was conducted there for many years. You will still see the Germany flag flying prominently in several locations in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Certainly the German air force was always a part of our community, and many personnel still are a part of our community. We hope to have you back sooner rather than later.

You talked about various categories of military personnel and the benefits that were associated with them and you gave a very good description of that. Do you have a separate category for veterans? How would you describe a veteran? Are the benefits similar for those who are retired from the military in some fashion? I'm just wondering how you designate veterans in terms of the German military.

LCol Matthias Reibold: Sir, as I've mentioned before, we do not use the term “veterans”, and our reservist system is absolutely not comparable to yours. The integration of veterans in your society is outstanding. I've had a lot of chances to attend occasions where veterans were involved.

When we talk about comparable things like veterans, we are talking about reservists totally, but the duty time for reservists ends. For example, if you are a conscript for nine months and you become a reservist, your time of duty as a reservist ends at the age of 40. If you are serving for a time of up to 20 years, depending on your rank, the latest point at which you end your time of duty as a reservist is 50. After that, you are out of the forces and you are no longer a reservist.

All those who are reservists have the title behind their rank—for example, lieutenant-colonel of reserve. That is the only system we have. But if you've reached the retirement age for reservists, you are no longer a member of the forces and are not a veteran in those cases.

● (1555)

Mr. Todd Russell: Okay. It's much different from the Canadian system, that's for sure.

What do you think are the advantages of our system compared to your own, when you have the chance to size them up? What type of direction might the German government be going in, in terms of its recent engagements in Kosovo and Afghanistan, where there's a different role being played by the German military?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Just let me describe it. With our conscript system, we are able to call up to duty, if we want to, in the worst case you can imagine, up to 10 million reservists. Every young male has served in our country. But on the other hand, to be honest and to be sure, sir, a soldier who has served for only nine months cannot identify himself with the forces in the same way as your professionals or your retired soldiers do, or the huge reserve component that you have in Canada. The identification with veterans who are in your society and the support your society gives those veterans is incredibly high, I think, from the things I have viewed so far here in Canada.

On the other hand, we have the principle of the citizen in uniform. This is an old principle from Prussian times, from Frederick the Great or from Scharnhorst, who was mentioned before. The thinking behind every male citizen of a country is that he is a native defender of his country too. That's the principle we are following.

Mr. Todd Russell: You had a contingent of the German air force in Goose Bay.

LCol Matthias Reibold: Yes.

Mr. Todd Russell: What would that contingent typically be made up of in terms of the structure?

I've met a lot of your air force personnel. Some were there as nine-month reservists. Some were beyond the nine months and up to two years—a lot were two years. But what would typically make up such a training component?

LCol Matthias Reibold: The training component depends on the specialization he has. We have a lot of reservists who we bring into our forces because of their qualifications. For example, think of somebody who is able to repair an air conditioning system. You don't have them in the forces and normally you do not train them. You have to hire those guys and bring them up. You give them reserve status or you give them a time contract, those conscripts I've mentioned before, of up to two years or whatever is needed. We take them into our forces to have those specialized soldiers in our crews.

Especially in the air force, it is necessary to keep those qualifications. That's why we are using or hiring those guys as multiplicators for young generations that are coming up, so that we can hold on and follow on as always with the young generations in order to keep those qualifications.

Mr. Todd Russell: Thank you.

When can we look forward to your coming back? I'll have a table spread.

LCol Matthias Reibold: We hope we can do a little bit next year.

Mr. Todd Russell: Thank you. Wonderful.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Russell.

Now we'll go to Monsieur Perron, who is with the Bloc Québécois, for seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Good morning, lieutenant-colonel. I appreciate your French, which is remarkable.

To start with, I would like to deal with something that bothers me somewhat. You talked about a period of 9 to 20 months service for conscripts, and I wondered why young women were not admitted, given that for women, the minimum service period is two years?

On another subject, if I understood correctly, insurance companies are paying the cost of health care services provided to injured soldiers, and you are responsible for paying the full cost of insurance premiums. I hope that your insurance companies are not functioning the same as those in Canada, because in the case of the later, the higher the premium, the less compensation is paid up.

Should we worry about the service that is provided to these people?

● (1600)

[*English*]

LCol Matthias Reibold: On your first question, our constitution does not allow a woman to serve in the forces. We say this is the last male domain we have so far.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Macho.

LCol Matthias Reibold: Yes, sir.

A couple of years ago, a young lady went to the federal court and fought for the right to serve in the forces. She won and was the first to serve in our forces. She opened all branches and units of the forces to women. Before that, women could only serve in the medical health service.

To be honest, we have not changed our constitution to say we will take women in the same way as we take men into our services. I don't know when this will happen. I can't answer that question yet. But women have the right to serve on a voluntary basis, and then to start with a contract from two years up to 20 years if they like.

On your second question, in the German system all life insurance or health insurance contracts have a war risk clause. That means that if somebody is killed, badly injured, or wounded in war circumstances like enemy fire or being hijacked, those insurance contracts will not pay. To have equality between our civil society and soldiers who are serving on missions under the war risk, our government has decided to pay insurance up to €250,000. It is not worth it to make a policy for €1 million, because the government will only pay up to €250,000. This is the law to compensate for the war risk clause.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: In am enormously intrigued and interested by another matter, that is the situation of young people who are coming back from a theatre of operations and who are suffering from what I call a psychological injury or the post-traumatic stress syndrome. In view of your experience in Afghanistan, in Kosovo and in Congo, among others, I would like you to tell me whether some of your young recruits coming back home are suffering from the post-traumatic stress syndrome and, if so, what care you are providing them.

[*English*]

LCol Matthias Reibold: It is a clear and definite yes. Our rate is, in the same way, as high as your rate.

● (1605)

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: What is your percentage?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Our percentage, we say, is about 2% to 5% per every crew coming back from the missions.

We have suffered so far. I served as a commander of the German PRT in Kunduz in north Afghanistan for eight months. I brought home with me four deaf soldiers and 32 soldiers who suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome.

But you have to always bear in mind that the stress syndromes are not always seen during the mission or directly at the end of the mission. This is a long-term disease. We still have soldiers who were on missions in 1999 in Kosovo who are starting to have post-traumatic stress syndrome today. We have also had to learn to deal with them, because it was not an accepted disease in our society, and nobody thought about those syndromes that came up. It's always the same with those new social diseases, like so-called burnout syndrome or something else like that. We have had to learn to deal with those things.

In 2000, when we had our first facts on those soldiers, we started to do an international study. We had access to the American studies of PTSD. Then we started to educate doctors and also those guys who deal with mental diseases...I'm sorry, I do not have the word for them at the moment. They are trained to deal with those soldiers psychologically as well as on a preventive basis.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: You could call it a psychological wound, *une blessure psychologique*.

LCol Matthias Reibold: That's right, sir.

We trained those doctors. We also have six military hospitals in Germany, and in two of those hospitals we now have a branch that deals only with those soldiers suffering from PTSD. And we have made some good progress in helping those soldiers overcome those wounds.

The hardest case was a soldier who went accidentally into a minefield and lost both legs and both arms. This amputee is now not only suffering from his physical wounds, he is also suffering from PTSD. And while he was lying in this minefield, he was attacked. You can imagine that this is the worst case we have had. To help this guy is nearly impossible.

But in lesser cases—I like to use the term “minor effects” of PTSD—the symptoms include sleeplessness and feeling warm and cold. Those are things that are pretty quickly treated.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Does that include nightmares?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Nightmares are helped pretty quickly. But when there are other things, the breakup of families or friendships, for example, those people go into isolation. These people need a long time and long-term care.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was a touching and fascinating story.

Now we'll go over to the New Democratic Party, and Mr. Stoffer, for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sir, it's good to see you again. Welcome to the committee.

Sir, you said earlier that if a soldier is looking after his parents or her parents, the parents are entitled to some kind of benefit if that soldier dies. If the soldier is a single individual with no children and no spouse, and he dies, would the parents receive the €250,000?

LCol Matthias Reibold: In that case, no, the parents would not get this pension. Unless he was responsible for the parents because the parents are no longer able to fulfill their duties and stuff by themselves, no, they won't get this money. The money is lost in those cases.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: We found out, too, that the children of married soldiers who come back suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder suffer a lot as well, as do the spouses. Are there any programs in place in Germany to help those children deal with their psychological problems?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Family members are involved in the same program as the soldiers. Thank you very much for this remark, sir, because it's one of those things I know very well myself. I have three kids, and my wife stayed with me here and she knows about those effects too and what they mean. We are away for eight months, and what this means to the kids, especially when she has to manage all the situations by herself.... Yes, there is also some caretaking for the kids if those kids are identified as having some of those symptoms.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Sir, in Canada we also have a program called the veterans independence program, whereby when soldiers are elderly or have a certain income or a certain disability and are in their sixties, seventies, or eighties, we try to encourage them to stay in their own homes as long as possible by providing them groundskeeping services for their yard if they indeed have a yard, or housekeeping services—preparation of meals, laundry services, those kinds of things. Is there a program like that in Germany?

LCol Matthias Reibold: No. We have a common program for all people in our society that is relatively new. We've had it for five years. This is the nursing and insurance plan that, under law, every male in Germany has to have. This insurance covers, for example, things he needs help with, such as those you've mentioned. That's why we have that insurance. But there's nothing extra for soldiers.

● (1610)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: What would the budget be? I know they're not called veterans, but for the soldiers who leave the military and have this care, is there a certain department? And what is the budget of that department? Do you know?

LCol Matthias Reibold: No, sir. I have to check this out, but I will come back to you with that number, and I will provide you those data, sir.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Now we go to the Conservative Party of Canada, and Mrs. Hinton, for seven minutes.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Thank you very much for coming today.

One of the things you said was that the German legislature takes care of veterans. I believe I heard you say that. Are you talking about just in general, and do you use the ombudsman when there's a serious issue for veterans, since there doesn't seem to be a veterans affairs department? Is that correct?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Ma'am, this is correct, yes. We don't have a veterans affairs department. We have only, as I mentioned before, a department within the military service that looks after the reservists' affairs. When something happens to those soldiers...for example, if a father dies and he is a conscript and has served between two and 20 years, his wife gets a widow pension of 60% of his last income, and the orphan pension to the kids is 30%. So in total, the family is fully covered as long as necessary for the survival of the kids and the family in total. This money will be reduced, for example, if the wife remarries.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: It was interesting also to hear that you don't have any sort of VIP program, and if I heard you correctly, you said that it's a matter of being self-insured. So if a person is looking for care in their older years....

In your country, everybody serves. You were saying that it's mandatory. We don't do that here, so I suppose maybe the difference in approach would be that when you have a country in which every single citizen serves, you wouldn't put programs in place for a specific group of people who serve, as is the case in Canada. So it's kind of hard to compare. You're basically talking about the defence side of things more than the veterans side of things, because in your country there isn't a veterans program.

LCol Matthias Reibold: There is no program that is comparable to the Canadian program, but let me give you some examples. An example is health insurance. I said before that the family's health costs are paid up to 80%; for the remaining 20%, I have to pay for private insurance for my family from my salary. Also, for as long as I live, as a professional I will receive from the forces 80% coverage of my costs after my retirement until I die. The rest I have to pay from my private insurance program.

Costs for soldiers who are leaving the forces—for example, after 12 years of service as conscripts on time—are also covered up to 80%, but after they have left the forces, they must pay the money for the health insurance by themselves from their salaries.

Health insurance in Germany is mandatory for everybody. This money is directly taken away from the monthly salary that the boss is paying to his employees. Afterwards they are covered. The longer you are with a health insurance company, the lower the amount of money you have to pay in as a monthly rate. That is the reason our forces pay retroactively for the time he serves in the forces—for example, 12 years. The German forces pay those 12 years in advance for this guy, so that he is insured in the same way as he would be if he had started with mandatory health insurance, for example, at 18 years of age. He gets the same rates then.

● (1615)

Mrs. Betty Hinton: I can come back to that, but you mentioned something else. My interpretation was that a regular or career soldier serves somewhere between two and 20 years, and that's when you get the family health costs paid at 80%. Then, after service, you do the education and the training, and it's 75% of the salary and the costs of the training.

LCol Matthias Reibold: Yes.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: We have a program that does that too. When a soldier leaves the service, we pay for retraining, and if the soldier is not in a position to be retrained, we will train the spouse. Do you have a similar system, or is it the soldier or nobody?

LCol Matthias Reibold: No, ma'am, we don't have a similar system. After he has retired, he can get up to five years—75%—of his last income. That depends on how long the education lasts, at least. All the education will be paid in full, but for sure up to only a certain amount, which cannot be something extraordinary. It has to be a normal education that belongs to our system.

In the case of a soldier who is no longer trainable or in a case of the type you mentioned before, ma'am, I am sorry, but we don't train the spouses. Then he is dependent on the social assistance in our country.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: The last thing you mentioned was one of the things that stuck in my mind. You said that when people serve their country, their jobs are safe and secure, so that when they do come back, their jobs are waiting for them. We just did that last year. I think it's important that if you're going to serve your country as a reservist, you shouldn't have to worry about having a job when you come back, so it's nice to see that parallel.

LCol Matthias Reibold: This is the law in Germany, because we have the conscript army. Nobody can, for example, hire a guy, send him to the reservists, and then kick him out. That is not allowed; it is regulated by law.

Also, he must be taken over for at least one year. His job is secure. In the case that the firm he has worked for breaks down, we will also see that he gets an additional job to suit his qualifications. Therefore, we have a special service in our forces to help those guys.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: Thank you very much. My time is up.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we're on our second round of rotation, which means each member has five minutes.

We're over to the Liberal Party of Canada and Mr. Valley. You have five minutes, sir.

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): Thank you for coming today and helping us understand a system that's so different from ours.

I want to get right to a couple of questions. You mentioned there was a new law brought in in 2007, and if I heard you correctly, it has to do with some of the changing realities, the new challenges we face, the many conflicts, and some different aspects. We hear this over and over again from our own forces and from other forces. We've asked questions of the Australians and the Americans. The conflicts have changed and we're facing things that we never faced before, plus we're starting to understand the mental health side. As you said before, it wasn't socially acceptable in the past, but for whatever reason, it's a new reality for us.

One of the challenges we have here is that as we try to cover off the mental health issues, we're short of health professionals. We're short inside the military; we're short in the public sector. We hear over and over again that people who need service are having to wait longer times for it. When they leave the service, there's sometimes a total break, which is not acceptable and we're trying to correct it. I'm just wondering—and if I said anything wrong about the 2007 law, correct me—what access people in the service have. When they leave the service, is there timely access to mental health services? Are there enough providers?

● (1620)

LCol Matthias Reibold: In cases of PTSD or in the case of someone suffering from a severe injury, as I mentioned before, they're looked after as long as this lasts. This is the only exception to the other timelines I mentioned before. We have this law now that says the forces have to employ those soldiers as long as they want to stay. So they have full professional status, as I have.

On your second point, sir, we are paying our medical personnel better than regular, normal soldiers. For example, if we want to have doctors or specialists, we pay for their whole university. We pay for them as long as it takes to become a doctor or a nurse, and we pay this totally in advance. Because they are trained on the civil side, we pay this, and in addition to that, they start with a full salary. And after they have become doctors—for example, if they earn the rank of captain or major—they always get the next highest payment. So if they are a major, they will get the pay of a lieutenant-colonel. So we make sure that our doctors are paid adequately so we will not lose them to the civil side. This is one of the things we're doing.

Mr. Roger Valley: We have somewhat similar programs. The problem we run into in Canada is that as they become more and more experienced, their value increases, and the private sector in Canada—and I presume in Germany—pays much higher than the military does, so we constantly have a bleed. As we bring them through and train them, and as their skills develop, and as their time in service goes by, they leave for the private sector.

Another thing that happens is that we lose all our professionals to the large urban centres. In a country as wide and diverse as Canada, we have no one serving in our small areas, or very few services are available. They migrate out of the military because their earning power is greater in the private sector. Plus, they migrate to the large cities, which is not always where their service is needed.

I'm just wondering if it's similar for you. Do you have the same challenges in trying to keep them in the military when the private sector pays more?

LCol Matthias Reibold: For example, for doctors, they have a contract to serve for a minimum of 16 years. If they kick out before or break off with us, they have to pay all the money back that we invested in them for their university and for them to become a specialized doctor—for example, someone who does heart surgery or something else. This is what is in their contract. The minimum time before they can get out of the army is 16 years, and then they can say, okay, I'm looking for a second career, and they have the chance to do so because they are well specialized and well trained to do so.

Afterwards, if someone is getting out, we always have someone as a backup who then can fill their shoes.

Mr. Roger Valley: My last question is this, and again, we have different systems, so I'm not sure I can explain it correctly. When our individuals leave the uniform behind and they transition to private life, we have a real problem with the records following them. They basically sometimes have no records following them, so they have a break in their medical history and a break in their medical service, which really creates a problem.

I gather that's not a problem at all in your service. Everything is seamless when they transfer to the private sector?

LCol Matthias Reibold: No, sir, this is not the case. As I told you, there is always somebody behind them as backup. When the doctor is doing his university studies, he finishes his doctor's degree, and then he needs a phase of a couple of years to gain experience.

While he is gaining experience he always has a mentor. This mentor has already become a specialist, and he is trained by this specialist. This specialist is, for example, a doctor in a rank of full colonel or general who has the status of professor or doctor. He has done a second specialized training.

Those guys are making the big money, as we say, because they are also allowed to treat civilians, and they have to pay for this. We have a lot of specialists within the forces, so we always have a system to guarantee that we do not run out of doctors.

But to be honest, in some cases when we're going on missions we're looking for specialists—for example, those who do surgeries. We are now extending our missions. We now have four PRTs in Kunduz. Every PRT has to be equipped with a professional doctor who is a physician, who is able to act there. We are running short of them too, so that means we concentrate.... We shut down four hospitals with those specially trained doctors, and then everybody has to be driven, for example, even if it's in a northern or southern part of Germany, in the area of Cologne and the mid-west part of Germany.

● (1625)

Mr. Roger Valley: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Le président: Mr. Gaudet, from the Bloc Québécois, you have five minutes.

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In Canada, we have a Veterans Charter since 2006 and an ombudsman since 2007. The charter was created for veterans of the war of 1939-1945.

What services do you provide to Second World War veterans? At the present time, there are some 200,000 veterans from the war of 1939-1945. What services are you providing to your former soldiers? I know that you do not call them veterans in your country.

[*English*]

LCol Matthias Reibold: Thank you very much, sir, for this question.

I can't agree to the number you said. I don't know the exact number. I'm sorry about this.

The thing is that we have a law for those war veterans coming from the Second World War. This law guarantees them a pension while they are wounded or handicapped. But under normal circumstances, a lot of them who came back from the war were able to find good jobs to make their way through, so they now belong to the same social system as everybody in Germany does.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Okay. I want to know whether there are specialized hospitals for them. In Canada, we have three such hospitals: one in Quebec, one in Ottawa and another elsewhere. Do they receive specific care? If not, do you have long-term care centres from some of these former soldiers? What additional services do they receive, as compared to current soldiers?

[*English*]

LCol Matthias Reibold: No, we don't have those services; we don't have those hospitals. We think everything is covered with our system that I described before. Even if they are no longer in the services, they have access to all public health systems. They can go there, they can be treated there, and they can be helped there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Here is my last question.

Let us suppose that a young 24-year old, married and with two children, is doing is nine months long military service. If he suffers a rather serious injury while on duty and has to have one of his leg amputated, who will take care of this soldier and his family? Will it be the insurance company, the government or the Department of Veterans?

[*English*]

LCol Matthias Reibold: In the case where he becomes injured—for example, he is wounded and can no longer fill his job as he has lost an arm, leg, or something else—he receives a pension. That means between 66% and 75% of his last income, and he will get this money for his whole life. This is paid by the forces; that means it is paid by the government.

For the children, for example, the costs that are needed for the school system are going to be paid, but only up to a certain amount of time. But we are also—and I want to make this clear—we are going to look into whether his woman is able to work. It is not our way for women to say they stick to their job or they stick to the family, because society has changed a little bit and we are also forcing the woman to work. If she does not, we start to cut down the pensions after a number of years.

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Gaudet: Thank you, Mr. Reibold.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Now we are over to the Conservative Party of Canada, and Mr. Shipley, for five minutes.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Thank you, Colonel, for coming. It was good to talk to you earlier also. I don't have a lot of questions.

When someone is in the armed forces and they go out of it and turn to private life, just for clarification, are there any services or benefits that are carried on to them once they leave the military? I think I heard that there isn't and they then make money of their own and they buy their own health insurance. Is that correct?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Yes, sir, this is correct. We will continue as long as it is needed to help the soldier recover from a wound or something else he incurred while serving on duty, or if his time is finished. We will do this up to three years after his service ends. Once he has recovered, he is to look for his own contract with health insurance outside. The health insurance must take him, because it's written in law. So his whole life is covered for all those things.

Mr. Bev Shipley: The health insurance must take him. Who sets the rate he pays, though?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Those rates are made by the government, and they depend on your age and your state of health.

Mr. Bev Shipley: So if you had a mental illness—for example, PTSD—and you were not able to carry on a full-time job, the premiums would be higher but the compensation would be higher?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Yes, that's the point. The insurance company has to take you.

Mr. Bev Shipley: You talked about the pensions: 60% for as long as it's needed and then I think 30% for children, offspring, for as long as they need it. How is that determined? Who makes that judgment for how long it's needed?

LCol Matthias Reibold: It's pretty simple. For example, if the wife is a widow and she gets married again, then this man has to take care of her and he makes a certain amount of money, and depending on the new husband's income, the pension is cut down.

In the case where the children are orphaned, they are entitled until they reach the age of 18. We pay 30% up to the age of 18, when they can look after themselves and go to work.

Mr. Bev Shipley: You mentioned that you have...I think it's called a parliamentary commissioner, which is something like our ombudsman. How does that work in Germany? Is that person hired and paid for by the military, by the government? And how does that work in terms of someone in the military? If they have a concern about a pension, a concern about something they're not able to receive, do they go to the ombudsman if they can't find a better way of getting there or they're incapable of carrying out that request on their own?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Our ombudsman is the same as the one in your system. He's a neutral person, and he's elected by the Parliament for a period of four years.

He has the right to report to the Parliament and to use what I'd say is the power of the Parliament. I'm hopeful you understand; it sounds somewhat wrong when I say it. But he can force the Parliament to do something in some special cases. He is a very powerful man. His position in Germany is much stronger than yours is. For example, he has the right, whenever he likes, to visit any force, talk to the commander, talk to the soldiers, and direct...[*Inaudible—Editor*]...on the point measures, for example, helping soldiers on those points. So that is a very powerful position. Every soldier has the right to send him a letter.

On the second part of your question, if there's something outside he has to go in front of the law. We have a social judge and a social court, and that's the way he has to deal with it.

● (1635)

Mr. Bev Shipley: So am I to understand that if someone has been in the military, they go out of the military at 35 years of age, they develop a mental health problem and they're looking for direction, the ombudsman is not part of their solution once they leave the military. Is that correct, or do they still have access to him?

LCol Matthias Reibold: As long as the treatment lasts, they have access to him.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Say the illness started after they left the military but it was a result of their military experience.

LCol Matthias Reibold: As long as the treatment lasts, he has the right to call up the ombudsman—in every case. If he is a civilian and, for example, the people caring for him make no decision, whether he is still ill or not, he can go to another committee of our Parliament and bring a petition to make sure his rights are taken care of.

Mr. Bev Shipley: Thank you, Colonel.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now to the Liberal Party of Canada, and Mr. St. Denis, for five minutes.

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Lieutenant-Colonel, for being here today to help us out. By triangulating what you do with another model, you can often get a better idea of your own, so we appreciate the ability to compare with other jurisdictions.

Obviously you've been in Canada for a little while, and you mentioned that you had participated in some of our veterans events. We have the Legions in Canada. Is there a network of social supports similar to our Legions to help veterans, either the older veterans or the newer retirees? Is there a social system like that, which is more or less voluntary and community based?

LCol Matthias Reibold: No, sir. In Germany we have the so-called organization of reservists. You can only belong as a member of this organization of reservists in Germany as long as you have reservist status.

After your reservist status expires, you can be a passive member, or a member without duties, as it is called in this case. We help and encourage reservist communities to organize members, to have a link between those reservists who are serving only one week per year, or whatever is needed. For example, after a reservist has finished his nine-month contract, a young soldier must serve 40 days, up to the age of 42. He can choose whenever he wants to do it. We encourage the reservist organization to take him in and, for example, encourage him to do a bit more than only those 40 days, or to apply for a higher grade and so on.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: Does the organization provide peer counselling or social supports? Can you go and have a beer, or is it a setting like a service club?

LCol Matthias Reibold: It's a private club; it exists by private means. If, for example, they want to have a beer or do some exercising, we give them our facilities to use; for example, in the barracks they can go into the mess and have a beer there, using the messes the same way as veterans do.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: But there's not a network of these community buildings owned outside the...?

Okay, thank you very much.

I was intrigued when you mentioned that those who've served in the military, if I understood you correctly, have access to jobs in the public service. Explain a bit, sir, how that works. Is it automatic? Is it discretionary? Is there training involved?

● (1640)

LCol Matthias Reibold: As a minimum, these people have to serve for 12 years, and they can apply for a governmental job. Then they have their three years' training, as I mentioned before, and they do another training period and can then go into the administrative work of the government, for example, or join the police or the fire department.

We like to help these people, because they are well trained. They are trained to obey any order, as I like to say, and they are specialized. A soldier offers a lot of advantages.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: If a former soldier applies, he or she, I assume, is guaranteed a job.

LCol Matthias Reibold: He has to try the same exams and testing as any other civilian. But if he takes his exams and passes all his tests, he will go ahead of all the others.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: Okay, there's a priority.

My final question is about one of the issues that came up in our hearings. In order to have continuity.... As you know, we have the medical structure inside the military and then we have the broader community health system, so that the day after a soldier leaves, in our system, he can't have access to the same doctor he had the day before: it's a military doctor on this day, and the day after he has to go to the community. One of our recommendations was to look at some time period wherein the soldier, even though he has left, would still be attached to his or her doctor in the military.

Did you not mention that they were guaranteed three months during which they could stay attached to the military structure?

LCol Matthias Reibold: No, sir. It can be from three months up to three years, depending on the time he has served. But in any case, as I mentioned, this only applies if, for example, in his last month of service he was injured, and it would take—

Mr. Brent St. Denis: Oh.

LCol Matthias Reibold: But if he is healthy and his time of duty ends, that's also when the relation with the doctor is broken off.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: So it's based on a specific injury, not just generally.

LCol Matthias Reibold: Let me make just one remark, if I may, sir.

We thought about the same situation also in our system, but we did not carry through with this because we saw that military doctors were so over-stretched that we could not continue the relation. That is one of the reasons we did not follow through on it.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we go back over to the Conservative Party of Canada, and Mr. Sweet, for five minutes.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of brief questions, but allow me, if I may, to digress a bit on behalf of Canadians who have watched western Germany unite with eastern Germany and have seen the Herculean effort it took. From what I understand from visiting for three weeks seven years ago, West Germans endured a substantial surtax in order to cover off all the development required to bring the eastern part of the country back into shape after domination by the Soviets. I wanted to give you great congratulations for what's happened and for the great efforts of the government and the people at large and to wish you continued success in it as well.

LCol Matthias Reibold: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. David Sweet: You mentioned a mandatory nursing insurance that gave a benefit similar to the veterans independence program. It looked after some modest health and personal care assistance in the home, etc. Then you talked about a mandatory health insurance.

For the average German citizen who is working, how many insurances are they actually having deducted from their income in order to look after health and retirement eventualities?

● (1645)

LCol Matthias Reibold: If I'm right, I think there are about five insurances.

There is the health insurance. There is the nursing insurance, which is for when you are, for example, no longer able to do anything by yourself, when you need help from a nurse to be washed and so on. Then we have to pay the unemployment insurance. We have to pay into the pension plan. These are the four.

Then, although I would not call it an insurance, every German pays into the unification some percent of his.... It's called the solidarity money. It's like an insurance.

Mr. David Sweet: I stayed in a rebuilt hotel in the former East Germany, and just from walking from the hotel to the former West Germany, I could tell the job that was required.

Earlier you said you had six hospitals, and then you answered again and said you didn't have any, but I think it was probably just because there was a misunderstanding. Do you have six hospitals dedicated to post-traumatic stress disorder care and research? Is that what you meant?

LCol Matthias Reibold: No, what I meant is that we have six military hospitals all over Germany, and two of them have branches or sections that deal with PTSD, mental health services.

Mr. David Sweet: So you're doing substantial research on post-traumatic stress disorder. Is that an overstatement?

LCol Matthias Reibold: We are learning through the cases coming up. We are learning with the people who are being treated.

Mr. David Sweet: Does your defence health department have a dialogue with our veterans affairs department?

LCol Matthias Reibold: I don't know, sir. I can't answer that question.

Mr. David Sweet: Those were all the questions I had. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm now going to take my prerogative as chair for my five minutes. As it turns out, it does work out that way.

You mentioned that a widow's pension is 60% and an orphan's pension is 30%. I take it that is calculated on the full.... Is that calculated like a regular soldier's pension? You said they will receive anywhere from 60% to 75% of their income. Do you calculate that on the pension amount for the soldier or do you calculate it on the full amount of the salary for a regular soldier?

LCol Matthias Reibold: In this case, it is counted on the last income you receive. But the older a person gets, the less money they get. For example, if I'm going to retire and I'm going to get my 72%, and something happens to me before my wife dies, then she will get only 60% of my 72%.

The Chair: That's fascinating.

LCol Matthias Reibold: This is the time when you are retired, when you are an old man or old woman—sorry for saying this—and it is then calculated on this principle. We base our system on the fact that if you are this age, you have your house, you have your flat, and your normal costs of living are not as high as that of the soldier.

The Chair: I understand.

Then when you say there's a 30% orphans pension, is that per orphan? Let's say, for example, somebody had four children. It would be 30% per child, for a total of 120%, right?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Yes. We calculated this amount because children are extremely expensive.

The Chair: Fair enough.

In the testimony we received from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, I was very intrigued by what they told us about funeral arrangements in military veterans cemeteries. If, for example, a German soldier passes away in Afghanistan or in Kosovo or some place like that, and the family wants to bury him themselves, what funeral arrangements are worked out? Do you pay for that? Do you compensate the family? If they have no family, where would you set them up? Would it be a military cemetery, or would it be some place else? How would you make those arrangements?

● (1650)

LCol Matthias Reibold: Every soldier who dies in mission receives a full government funeral. A government funeral is with all the honours, with the music and everything needed to honour this person and whatever he has done. The coffin is covered with a flag, and the guards stand by shooting and giving the salute. This is also organized by the military, by the responsible military homeland defence commander in that area. He has to organize this. If they don't want to have this funeral—and this has happened—then the costs are covered up to €3,000.

The Chair: What about the burial plot itself?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Every family can choose the burial place and what sort of burial they want—whether they want the person burned or put in a coffin.

The Chair: Is that cost covered by the German government or by the family?

LCol Matthias Reibold: The costs are covered by the government, but only up to a certain amount, which is €3,000.

The Chair: Do you have military cemeteries so that if somebody passes away and they don't have family they're buried there?

LCol Matthias Reibold: No, we don't have them in Germany. We only have them in the countries where we fought during the Second World War.

The Chair: Is there anything that the German system provides that we could benefit from? Is there something that Germany does well that Canada could benefit from?

LCol Matthias Reibold: That's a tough question.

The Chair: That's why we're doing the study.

LCol Matthias Reibold: I think you're doing your citizens well, very well, and I say this as a neutral observer. You have an outstanding CDS, chief of defence forces. I had the chance to watch two Canadian funerals and to see your Highway of Heroes. This is one of the things we could learn from Germany.

The Chair: We are now over time. Now we are going to go to *M. Perron avec le Bloc québécois pour cinq minutes.*

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Even if we are smiling, that does not mean that we are not serious, my dear friend.

I am now addressing the military man rather than the veteran. I know that our young soldiers, when they are joining the armed forces, receive some training on the nefarious effects on alcohol abuse, drug use and sexual harassment. We are just beginning to include in their training some information on the post-traumatic stress and the nefarious effects it can have. For example, before the last deployment of the Royal 22e Régiment from Quebec City in Afghanistan, soldiers had only a two and a half hour course.

Do you have the same system?

[*English*]

LCol Matthias Reibold: I do not know your system very well, but what I do know is that every one of our soldiers who is going on mission will run through pre-training on the points you mentioned, like alcoholism, drug prevention, and sexual harassment. We have a little bit of a different understanding compared with what your society is used to in terms of alcoholism, drug prevention, and sexual harassment. We drink a bit more, we have a bit more drugs, and we have a little bit more sex.... I'm just kidding on this point.

An hon. member: Can I move there?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1655)

LCol Matthias Reibold: I'm sorry for that joke, but we are a bit more open-minded. So, for example, we have a policy that we can drink on missions and can smoke on missions. We do not have as many places as you have where it is forbidden to smoke; we are a bit open-minded and can still smoke in our pubs. We allow couples, if they are on mission together, to have areas where they can feel free, as I like to say.

But that doesn't mean we are not strict when there is drug abuse, alcohol abuse, or sexual harassment. We would directly fire those guys on those points, and bring them in front of both a civil court and a military court. We punish soldiers doubly—in front of a military court and, afterwards, also in front of a civil court. That means that the more freedom we have on the one side, the more abuse is punished on the other hand. Our soldiers go through six months of pre-training, where these things are covered in several hours, not so much in terms of prevention but to make it clear to the soldiers what is going to be done to them if they fail on this.

We have had cases, and I will talk of three examples during my tour. I had a guy who was an alcoholic. He was a reservist, and we found out he was alcoholic during his tour. You always have to bear in mind that these guys are carrying weapons with them or driving a tank or something else, so that when you find this out, you have to take measures, including some preventative ones that must work. In Afghanistan, it's the easiest thing to buy drugs on every corner—you can do this—and we had guys who started to deal drugs in my compound, in my area. I had to fire 12 guys because of this drug abuse. And I had a case of a soldier who forced a woman, with his weapon in his hands, to do him some favours, as I call them. You cannot ever say, even if you do some prevention against these things, that cases like this do not happen. They also happen in our forces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: I am talking about giving young soldiers, new recruits some information on the post-traumatic stress syndrome and the symptoms that they should be watching for during a mission.

I believe that Germany has a population of some 60 million people. Is that correct?

[*English*]

LCol Matthias Reibold: To answer your first question, sir, we have 82 million people in Germany.

As to the second question, we do PTSD training to recognize the basic symptoms, and we also have a so-called buddy program. We say that everybody has to choose a buddy. The commander also needs a buddy, just as the soldiers below do. They are trained to be the backups always for the other soldier, to help them. From time to time, soldiers need to cry, need help, and need to speak and get their sorrows out, and all of those things. That is why we have this so-called buddy program.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: It's still on since the 1915 war.

LCol Matthias Reibold: Yes, that's right, sir.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: The buddy system in Germany's army.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we're on to the Liberal Party of Canada, and Mr. Valley, for five minutes.

Mr. Roger Valley: Thank you.

You commented about when they have problems with either drugs or alcohol and they're driving a tank or carrying a gun. I just came back from Afghanistan. It was quite unique, because you can't get a cup of coffee there, you can't get an airplane, unless you have a gun. So they're very strict about making sure you have them.

Here is just a quick question. In the bureaucracies we build in Canada—and I assume it's the same in Germany—no matter what you build, there are always gaps and there are always cracks, and people fall through them, because that's human nature; you know, we're weak. You've explained your system very well, as well as we can understand a system that we hadn't heard about before. What do you see as one of the weaknesses that your system lets what I call veterans, but I understand the difference...? Is there a main problem you've seen over your years of service, where something could be done better?

● (1700)

LCol Matthias Reibold: Absolutely, sir. We have the issue that we cut off their relations after they lose their status as a reservist. I think this is one of the biggest disadvantages we have in our system. There is no looking after for them, even if you do it on a voluntary basis with those guys and keep them in the circle of your former reservist soldiers. I think this is one of the biggest disadvantages we have in our system.

Mr. Roger Valley: Yes. It's similar for us here. There's such a structured family in the military, and all of a sudden they're by themselves and they're gone off to different areas. We have that here.

LCol Matthias Reibold: We don't have that. There is no similar structure.

Mr. Roger Valley: That's all the questions I have.

Thank you very much. You've been very informative.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Valley.

Now I think we just have Mr. Sweet, and Monsieur Perron wishes to make some sort of quick comment.

Monsieur Perron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Mr. Sweet, perhaps I will be playing the role of chair of this committee, but I would like to recommend a visit to Sainte-Anne Hospital in the Montreal area. This hospital is specializing in cases of post-traumatic stress syndrome and the personnel is working hand in hand with Americans. Canadians have nothing to fear in this regard: they are at the forefront of the study of post-traumatic stress problems. If you had more time, you could visit that hospital to see how they are treating people suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. I could try to arrange an appointment for you.

[*English*]

LCol Matthias Reibold: I'd like to thank you very much for this great offer. Sir, I will come back to this, and if you don't mind, I would invite one of the highest-ranking specialists we have in Germany to come over to Canada. If you allow it, he can accompany me on this, so we have a chance to do this.

Thank you very much for this great offer and invitation. I will come back to this for sure, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: I am sure that this committee will facilitate your visit to Sainte-Anne Hospital.

[*English*]

LCol Matthias Reibold: Thank you very much, sir.

The Chair: We have Mr. Stoffer and Mr. Sweet. Mr. Sweet has priority because he got dibs in first.

An hon. member: He's older.

Mr. David Sweet: Very good idea. *Bonne idée, monsieur Perron*, regarding Sainte-Anne's.

When we were talking—and we've learned a lot about the German system, Mr. Chairman—the lieutenant-colonel was mentioning his pension and the fact that he got 72%, and that if something happened to him his wife got 60%. I thought it would be appropriate for us to make sure we mention to him that he should have that reviewed at the highest order, because by my math that means a lieutenant colonel is only worth 12%, and I think it should be much more.

I just wanted to share that humour with you, Lieutenant-Colonel, and thank you.

The Chair: It depends on the circumstance. I think you said it was 60% of 72% if—

LCol Matthias Reibold: That is after my retirement. During my time when I serve fully, she gets 60% of the income I have today if something happens to me now. She always gets the pension from the income I have now, and since I am now serving with 100%, she gets 60% of the 100% if something were to happen to me. If my wife then got also to the retirement age, and she hasn't remarried, she would get then only 60% from the so-called calculated 72%, because she has already also retired. But luckily the civilian retirement age in Germany is 67, and my wife is eight years younger than I, so it would be a funny time for her....

● (1705)

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer, do you have a quick wrap-up comment?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: I have two quick questions.

I think the next time we visit, Lieutenant-Colonel, we should do it at the Heidelberg Café in Heidelberg, Germany. It's a very beautiful place. You could always bring beer next time for after the meeting.

Okay, I have two questions.

In Canada, one thing that I think all of us are very proud of is the set-up of what we call the military family resource centres. There are 34 of them across the country. They're generally attached to bases and organizations that we have. When troops go overseas, the families have an area or an outlet to go to so they can bond together, work together, and share their experiences.

My first question is, do they have those types of facilities in Germany? If they do, does the government assist them in any financial way?

The second question I have is about your pension. In Canada for the military member whose wife dies before he's 60 years old, if he remarries before 60 years old, lives for 20 years and dies, then his second wife would get his pension. But if he remarries after 60 and then dies later on, his second wife is entitled to no pension at all. Do you have that concern in your country as well?

LCol Matthias Reibold: Sir, regarding your first question, yes, we have family resource centres. They are driven by the military, and what is very important is that they also have a double hat. One side is male and military, and the other side is female and civilian. This is a most important thing, because only a woman can help a woman solve certain problems that a man could not solve. That's why we have the double hat at every family resource centre. We have women who usually work in a kindergarten and they also work in those family resource centres to take care of the kids. At the division level, we have civil psychologists working in military units, and they also belong to those family resource centres just to help families and also for prevention measures.

I think our family resource centres are pretty well organized. They have money from the military. They have their own cars. For example, if a wife calls and needs a lift to the shopping centre, they will provide it for the wife. The family resource centre can also solve minor problems, such as if something in the household is damaged. They have the equipment, personnel, and money to deal with all those problems.

What was the second point?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: It's a restriction that we have in Canada that if you remarried after 60, your second spouse would be entitled to nothing at the time of your death. But if you remarried before 60, your second spouse would be entitled to a pension.

LCol Matthias Reibold: Thank you very much for getting me back on track.

We also have some of the same restrictions. It's pretty common in Germany to be married a couple of times—especially our former Chancellor, for example, who was married four times. When you are married the third or fourth time, sir, then your pension is reduced from marriage to marriage. It goes down. When you get remarried, the pension is reduced. But also—and this is a law in Germany—when you are married a couple of years to somebody, for example in your second marriage, you also have a right to get money from his pension. That cannot be accumulated; it has to be brought into the relation. For example, if you married, remarried, and remarried, you would not get more because of the number of marriages, but you would at least get an average of pensions from all three marriages.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Thank you.

The Chair: With that, sir, I would like to thank you very much for your presentation today. I think we learned a great deal about how your country is dealing with some of these things. It's given us some ideas for thought.

We do have somebody who wants to speak after the fact, maybe to committee business or something like that. If you don't mind, I'm just going to wrap things up, and then maybe we'll break for a minute or something and allow people to say their goodbyes to you, and then we'll allow committee members to speak on some other issues.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1710)

The Chair: Thank you very much, colleagues.

Mr. Shipley, did you have something you wanted to raise?

Mr. Bev Shipley: Mr. Chairman, a colleague—the guy who lost out to the page in the soccer club—brought up a good point the other day during the Australian...[*Inaudible—Editor*]...regarding some of the costs of our veterans department.

I don't know if I have to put forward a motion, but I'll just bring it to you. Would the committee see it as an advantage to have the researcher—and if he needed it, with the assistance of the Library of Parliament—come up with a report? I think it would be advantageous for us, if we're going to be considering the efficiencies of our veterans department, to take a look at the departmental budgets of the G8 countries. I'm not talking about a glossed-over view, because I think we also found that some will have hospitals included and some won't. I'm talking about a significant breakdown. If we're going to agree to do it, there's only one way to do it, and that's to really know how efficient and how effective our veterans affairs department is.

I would ask for comments. Do you see having a report come forward to be of value? I don't know how many more witnesses will come forward, but I would like to be able to have this before we break.

The Chair: I'm certainly sympathetic to the idea of sitting. I'm glad Mr. Stoffer raised those issues, because it does give us some good food for thought. Time-wise, I don't know how it's going to work over the next little while.

Mr. Bev Shipley: It's not likely. We may only be here for a week and a half.

The Chair: It could be hard, given the fact that we're facing ten votes tonight, and who knows what's going to happen anyhow?

Monsieur Perron.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Bev, that is a great idea. Thank you again, Peter, for asking this brilliant and intelligent question last week. That was one of my concerns. I know that Michel will have nothing to do during the summer, so I must keep him busy.

Some hon. members: Ah, ah!

Mr. Gilles-A Perron: I would like to know how many hospitals they have, without necessarily having their detailed budgets. Perhaps we could do a comparative study on budgets, population, the number of military people and employees. We could even draw up a sort of diagram. That would be quite interesting.

● (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: I think it's a great point. Perhaps I can just offer something for consideration with regard to what Michel is going to do.

I know that...and people can ideologically debate the value of this, but I had a friend who used to invest in private prisons in the United States. What was fascinating was that on their prospectus they had the various private prison systems broken down versus the public prison systems. They compared them in terms of the cost per stay and per day and made comparisons relative to various hotel chains. It was fascinating to see how they could figure out where a maximum security prison was relative to the entire market for various accommodations. It's fascinating stuff, for whatever that's worth.

Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Mr. Shipley, thank you for that.

I will let the committee know I got a call from DVA shortly after that. So either she transcribed the information very quickly, or they're listening in. They were a little defensive. I think they were concerned that maybe we were comparing apples to oranges.

Mr. Shipley's point is very valid. I know, Michel, you have the whole summer to work on it, but it would be very interesting to compare our allies, what their departments are, how efficient they are in terms of the number of people they have, what benefits they offer, what they don't offer, so we don't compare apples to oranges but apples to apples. I would definitely agree with that.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Valley.

Mr. Roger Valley: I agree with almost everything that Bev and Peter said, except for that word "intelligent".

I think we need this information, but we're going to have to give it time if we want accurate information. I have to be honest; we're not going to do a lot with it in the summer.

A comparison would be nice. I'm not sure if it should go to the full G8. Maybe we can think about that and talk about it at the next meeting. Maybe we pick the countries we've looked at: Britain, Australia, and something like that. We need to compare apples to apples, as Peter said. I think it would be fascinating to find out, but we're going to have to give him some time to get it done, because we want valuable information.

The Chair: Fair enough.

An hon. member: We're not in a rush. We won't be back until mid-November.

The Chair: I will also let the committee know that we successfully got our $500 budget approved to visit the cemetery. They were generous to us in the Liaison Committee today.

Mr. Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet: Just to put in my two cents here, I'm in agreement as well. But on comparing apples to apples, after we define how many countries we want to compare and the nature of the flow chart with services rendered, costs, etc., we need to make sure we look at things like what the economy is like in the different countries. When the question was asked, my concern was about what a dollar buys in Australia compared to here. We need to make those macroeconomic considerations as well so we can really make a good comparison.

The Chair: Mr. Perron.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: We're always talking about the G8—are we good; are we bad? Why don't we compare it to the G8 and maybe include Russia? Is Russia a member of the G8 now?

An hon. member: No, they're a few rubles short.

The Chair: Mr. Stoffer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: The problem is that Australia, New Zealand, and Holland are not part of the G8.

The Chair: That's understood. Maybe after we have a few more presentations we'll kind of narrow that down and determine it.

With that, folks, the meeting is adjourned.

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