



House of Commons  
CANADA

## **Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs**

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ACVA • NUMBER 012 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

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**EVIDENCE**

**Monday, April 20, 2009**

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**Chair**

**Mr. David Sweet**

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Monday, April 20, 2009

• (1530)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC)):** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

We are continuing our study of the comparison of veterans services within the G-8 as well as the Commonwealth. We're very thankful to have General Bonotto with us today.

Welcome, General. I see that you have a PowerPoint presentation for us, live and in colour. Can I ask you how long your presentation will be?

**Brigadier-General Sanzio Bonotto (Brigadier-General, Italian Defence Attaché, Embassy of the Italian Republic in Canada):** It will be about 20 minutes to half an hour.

**The Chair:** Our tradition is to give you the time for your presentation and then go through the rotation of the different political parties. They'll have a chance to ask you questions.

General, thank you very much for taking the time to address the committee.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. I'm the Italian defence attaché and it's a pleasure and an honour to be here today in front of the committee to give an overview of the Italian military pension system.

First of all, I want to apologize for my accent and my poor English. I'll try to do my best to be as clear as possible. If I'm not clear, just ask me and I'll try again.

The Italian pension system is not easy to understand because it has suffered numerous changes in recent years. If I were to go to the office to ask for my pension, it would take a couple of hours just to give me an idea of how much my pension is. It's not too easy.

Before I begin with the pension system, I'd like to give you a short presentation about our organization and about how people can join the Italian armed forces. I want to give you a brief description of the Italian enlistment system.

For the officers, enlistment is through the academy and by public competition. After the academy, the officers are in permanent staff service. Based on their specialization, there is a conscription period when they must stay in service. For other officers—I'm talking about the public competition—after a period of two or three years, mainly, they can join the permanent staff service through an internal competition. After that, they have a period of conscription that will

be at least 5 years and that could be 10 or 15 years depending on the specialization.

For non-commissioned members, there can be enlistment through the public competition from the volunteer personnel, or VP4. I will try to explain why we have VP1 and VP4. These are Italian acronyms, but I will try to explain them in English. Since 2005 we haven't had mandatory conscription, so the lower rank of service is granted through voluntary conscription and also public competition, whereby the people can join the armed forces.

After one year of conscription, they can apply for another period that lasts for at least four years. After four years, they can, through an internal competition, join the permanent service and maintain the same lower rank as a serviceman or go to the sergeant or the warrant officer ranks. After that, they can stay in the service until the maximum age for retirement.

Now I will say a few words to explain the Italian defence organization. The organization chart you see is of our defence organization as it has been since the 1997 reform. Put under the actual commander in chief, the chief of defence staff, are all the chiefs of single services. Before 1997, all the chiefs of the army, navy, and air force—the *carabiniere* was under the army—could speak with the minister as well as with the chief of defence staff. After the reform of 1997, the single services were put under the command of the chief of defence staff. At the moment, our chief of the defence staff is General Vincenzo Camporini.

• (1535)

In looking at the chart, you can see the chief of defence staff, and also the NAD, national armament defence, which is in charge of procurement, research, and so on. For these kinds of matters, he can speak directly to the minister. For other matters such as operational matters or to buy something that is operational, we have to go to the chief of defence staff to ask what he needs in regard to a mission or the operational staff and so on.

The chief of defence staff has two headquarters. One is the general operations headquarters that is responsible for all the operational issues. The Joint Command Special Forces is another operational command. There is also the defence general staff for policy and for the staff he needs.

Mainly, the numbers you can see in the chart are roughly about what they were last year. Now we are going to change, because we are going to reduce our budget by 30%, so the people are also going to be reduced. We are going to reduce to 180,000 people, more or less. Here, in the chart, we are at 190,000, more or less. We are going to reduce again in the future.

Now we'll take a fast look at out-of-area operations. Italy is involved in operations abroad, with more than 9,000 people in 21 countries. These numbers don't include the auxiliary personnel of the Red Cross, the Finanza guard, police, and other personnel that are not part of the defence ministry. Now we are going to look at the military personnel in out-of-area operations and at how they are treated in cases of disabilities. I'm speaking of operations as in the theatre of operations, not in place like Brussels or Canada. We are talking about places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and so on.

Our organization has stipulated that there be insurance with a private company and pays a premium for every single person involved. We pay the premium depending on the rank and the individual specialities of the person. Accordingly, the compensation is different for every single person. The premium that our administration pays each year is about four to five million euros.

In the next slide, you can see, in an approximate way, the value of the compensation. For death or permanent disability, it is up to 10 times the annual gross wage, but not more than a million and a half euros. In the case of death, the insurance has to pay 100,000 euros within 10 days. For medical services, there is a reimbursement for medical services received within six months, up to 10,000 euros, and so on.

The insurance paid for an event is to a maximum of 60,500,000 euros, so this means that if a lot of people, 100 people, are killed during an event, the insurance doesn't pay more than one million euros for each person. In a case of the use of weapons of mass destruction, the amount used is up to 10 million euros for each event. An event means that if something happens, it's in 24 hours. Somebody can endure an event that lasts only 10 minutes, but there are some fights that can last one day. An event is 24 hours, so if the event lasts 10 days, it's 10 events that the insurance has to pay for.

• (1540)

Now we are going to focus on the subject of the presentation, which is the Italian military pension system. The first great reform occurred from 1991 to 1995, with a period of transition that served as a buffer between two different pension systems. Since 1995, we have had minor changes, like the minimum period of service or age for retirement. As you can see in the slide, pensions were based on a retributive system in the past. They were calculated on the last salary. Don't look at minus 15 years, because I will be talking about that later.

For personnel on duty before 1991 with more than 18 years of service, the pension is calculated on the amount of the last salary. Currently, for the personnel on duty between 1991 and 1995 with more than 18 years of service, pensions are calculated on two amounts. The first is from before December of 1993 and the other is from January of 1994 and the amount is A plus B. It's a little bit complicated, but I hope to be clear about it later.

In the future, it will be completely different. Personnel who enlisted after January 1996, or with less than 18 years of military service on December 1995, will have their pensions based on their welfare contributions, which is about 33% of gross salary. Of that 33%, 8.80% is paid by the individual and 24.20% by the state. But the full amount is 33% of the salary.

Now we are going to see the meaning of "years of service", both effective service and pensionable service, because they are different. In respect of the years of effective or pensionable service, it's possible to have a right to a pension. Looked at in this light, there is also bonus service. This means that there is one year for every three or five years of effective service, depending on their specialization: flight, shipping, operations, war campaign, and others. But the maximum bonus must be five years, starting from 1998. That is the maximum number of years that people can gain.

I enlisted before 1972, so I was able to gain seven years of bonus service. My bonus service is seven years, but I have not had any further bonus service since then because the maximum is five years.

Now we're going to look at the end of service causes. It will be possible to have a pension when one reaches the end of one's service. You can choose the service because you have reached the pensionable age. There is the old age pension. As of 2008, the age for a pension is 60 for everybody. The age of 65 is for higher ranks, such as three-star generals and so on. After 20 years of service, which is the basic period, the pension is 44% of salary.

• (1545)

The maximum pension they can have is 80% of salary after 40 years. People can stay in service for more than 40 years. If they join the armed forces at 18 and stay until they are 60 years of age, they can work for more than 40 years, but the maximum pension is based on 40 years of service. The other years of service would disappear and are only good for another kind of benefit, which I will tell you about later. We have a retirement pension at 53 years of age for military personnel and at 57 years of age for people in public departments. People can retire and get a pension. The pension is based on 40 years of service.

Another cause for leaving the service is the inability to serve. There are two kinds of inability to serve. The first is not related to service, so the pension in this case is based on the period served. The minimum is 15 years of pensionable service or 12 years of effective service. You can see that it's possible to have 15 years of pensionable service, but if people have only 10 years of effective service, they don't have a right to the pension.

The other type is related to service. A pension is always guaranteed after one, two, or three years. The amount is in relation to the degree of disablement and is calculated based on the following: on last salary plus 10%, or on one of eight categories of disablement, as shown in the chart. A committee decides on the category of the disablement.

The most favourable treatment for the personnel will be applied. If they have the maximum pension of 80% after 40 years, the most favourable would be only the first and second categories. The other categories are less favourable. So I would have a pension based on the last salary, plus the first or the second category; otherwise, I could choose the last salary plus 10%. If I have the minimum pension based on 44% of my salary, the sixth category is the most favourable in the table; otherwise, the 10% would be more favourable.

In regard to servicemen's pensions, these are pensions for servicemen who served without receiving salaries. We are talking about a period of conscription when young people had to serve the state and received just a small salary or no salary at all. The table shows the amount of pension servicemen would receive in the case of injury or disablement. Like the previous system, it is based on categories, with eight categories. This is also for the men who served in the First World War, although now there aren't any, and in the Second World War. If you have any disablement, this is the pension you will receive. If you don't have a disablement and you served during the war, you don't receive this pension.

●(1550)

There is another cause for end of service. If the death is not related to service, the pension given to the survivor, of course, is based on the welfare contribution. We are talking about 33% of the gross salary paid during the last five years of duty. This pension is given to the spouse at 60% or at 80%, with 60% to the spouse and 20% to the child. You can see the percentages in the table.

If the deceased person is single and there are parents or siblings, the pension is given to them, but not all the time. It depends on whether the people were under his protection and so on. Otherwise, the parents or the sister or the brother don't get any pension.

Next we have pension related to service, the first category of pension. Think about the table you saw before. The first pension category is salary plus 100%, paid for three years to the surviving spouse and children. For the amount after three years, you have to look at these tables. The 60% for the spouse depends on the amount of the contribution the person has given to the state, but after three years, it changes a lot.

There are other bonuses for the people who leave the armed forces. In regard to the auxiliary service, when people go on pension with the maximum pension, they can go to the auxiliary service, but during this period people can be called back into service. The auxiliary service lasts for five years. The salary, or the amount given to the person, is the pension plus 70% of the difference between the service salary and the amount of the pension.

There's a difference between the salary when I'm in service and when my pension is given to me or to the people who are in this kind of service. After five years, the pension is recalculated with the new amount of salary, because I have worked for another five years. After this period, the auxiliary people go to the reserves. The reserve has a normal pension and the amount is indexed to the cost of living, like the other public pensions in the public compartment.

When I receive a pension, I have another bonus—I paid for the bonus—and that is called the golden handshake. That is based on one-twelfth of 80% of the annual salary multiplied by years of pensionable service, not years of service, but years of pensionable service. That takes into account the fact that I probably have more years of service, because I gained more years. As I mentioned, I gained seven years of pensionable service.

There is another kind of compensation, another indemnity, for death or disablement in service. This came from the police forces. It is during acts of terrorism.

●(1555)

The government has also decided to identify military people as victims, because some military forces work with military police against terrorism. So military people can now receive this kind of economic benefit if something should happen. It would be better if it didn't happen, of course, but it's now possible for people who are injured or who have some kind of disablement during their service to receive benefits.

As you can see, it's not only against terrorism; it's also against crime, policing, civil or military facilities surveillance, search and rescue activity, public safety protection activities, and intervention and deployment, including non-combat zones. So if you go into Afghanistan, Iraq, or Iran, and are injured, and your disablement is more than 80%, you can have this kind of benefit.

The bonus amount for more than 80% disablement is 200,000 euros. Then it's 2,000 euros for every percentage point of disablement. The monthly pay is 260 euros. I've also listed other kinds of benefits for people who've had something happen during their service.

This ends my presentation. I hope I was clear. If I wasn't clear, I'd be glad to answer your questions.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, General. We really appreciate your time. One of the things you've demonstrated to us is that when you're trying to do a comparison of service, it's not easy. Italy has a very unique system in and of itself. Of course, that's our challenge here, with this committee.

We'll now go to questions.

Madam Foote, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Thank you.

Thank you for your presentation. I listened with great interest, but I have to tell you that at some points I almost felt like interjecting; I got lost in terms of the definitions of service and the different categories.

I'll start by asking you about your PowerPoint presentation. In your section on insurance for personnel deployed in operations, you talk about the different compensation amounts awarded in terms of three categories: death or permanent disability, death, and medical services.

You've referenced death in two instances there. Could you explain the difference? What's the difference in terms of being compensated in terms of death or permanent disability and then just death? One pays up to 10 times the annual wage and the other one pays 100,000 euros within 10 days.

●(1600)

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** The first amount is what the insurance will give you in total. The other is what is issued in case of death. Ten days after the event, the insurance has to give 100,000 euros. But in the end, you will have the first amount.

So in the case of death, the insurance has to pay 100,000 euros, and then has to give you the difference.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** I'm sorry, I'm just having difficulty understanding the difference between the two.

Let's go on to medical services. It says in here, "reimbursement for medical services received within 180 days". You're talking six months here. So those impacted have to pay the costs up front for up to six months?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** The insurance has pay the costs up front. In Italy, not all the.... Health is public, but we have to pay for some things. The insurance has to pay an amount that covers the costs of medicals and so on.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** So the insurance will pay that?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. The state insurance covers the public service, and you have medical service, of course, but—

**Ms. Judy Foote:** So the state pays it for six months before the insurance does?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** No. The insurance pays, because the cost of medical drugs is not paid by the state. If you go to the doctor, sometimes the state pays 50%, so the difference has to be paid by the insurance.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Okay.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** So the people don't have to pay anything for 180 days.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** All right. Thank you.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Just to be clearer, if you are badly injured, the insurance has to pay one million euros. The insurance has to pay at least 100,000 euros cash and then the difference between one million euros after one year or after six months.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Okay.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** It's not really different. After 10 days, the insurance has to pay to cover 100,000 euros, and then they have to give you the difference.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** They have to move within 10 days.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. In the case of death, they have to pay 100,000 euros within 10 days.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Okay.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Then, afterwards, they have to give the survivors the difference between that amount and the compensation figure. Is that clearer?

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Yes. That's clear.

Let's move to years of service. I'm looking at effective service and bonus service. I'm just wondering about the bonus service. What's the financial benefit of the bonus service?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** For this kind of benefit, you have to pay. We pay the institute of welfare every month.

Every month, I pay an amount of my salary to the institute of welfare. When I gain this kind of years, I don't pay anything. I have to apply and pay for this year. That is not in my salary. This benefit comes after 35 years of service. Then you have five years of bonus and reach 40 years of service. This is the difference. After 35 years

of effective service, I can go onto the retirement pension, because I have 40 years of service. It's 35 years of effective service plus five years of bonus, totalling 40 years of pensionable service, and then the benefit is 40 years.

• (1605)

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Is it different for flight versus shipping versus operations?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. Flight is one year to three, so every three years, I gain one year. For shipping, I think it's the same. For operations, probably it depends on what kind of operations, but it's also 100%, so after one year, you gain one year. In case of war, probably it's the same.

So it's different. If your service is not so stressed, probably you gain one year after five years. Sometimes you don't gain anything. It depends on the specialization.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** You've talked about the old age pension, and then there's a retirement pension. Can you explain the difference between the two?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** You get the old age pension when you reach the maximum age of service, which is now 60 years. When you reach 60 years, you have to go into retirement. This is the old age pension. It's called the old age pension because you cannot stay in service.

If you are 53 years old and an officer, and you have 40 years of pensionable service, you can get the pension. At the end of the month, you have a pension. Otherwise, you have to wait until you're 60 years old.

**The Chair:** I want to clarify something on the question of bonus time. Does that bonus kick in because of a voluntary payment by the service person?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. If I don't pay, I don't have any—

**The Chair:** You don't qualify for the bonus.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** —economic benefit. You don't have anything.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

For the Bloc Québécois, Monsieur Lévesque.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Bonotto. You have answered one of the questions I was going to ask you about the maximum retirement age. Do you have the figures for the years of age-related service, say 80 years, that give the equivalent of a retirement age of 60?

Say that you are 25...

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. I think I understand. I'll try to explain.

If you joined the armed forces, at 50 years you are not able to go at 60 years of age and you don't have 40 years of service. The calculation is made: 44% until 50 years of service or 20 years of service, it depends, and then you have an increase of 1.8% or 2% for every year of service over 20 years. So after 30 years, we have at least another 20% of minimum pension that you have to increase.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** What is the maximum pension for someone 50 years of age with 30 years of service? For example, the 80 rule...

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. There is a maximum for the pension. After 20 years of service, you can increase at 1.8% or 2% for every year of service. If you have 30 years of service, you start from 20, and go until 30 years, so you gain 10 years. Because the increment every year is 2%, you can start from 44%, which is the minimum, and then you arrive at 64% for the pension.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Is there a minimum age to join the armed forces. Is it 17 or 18?

• (1610)

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes.

[Translation]

The minimum age is 17 or 18.

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Right.

Page 9 of your document deals with the inability to serve. If a serviceman has lost one, two or three limbs, is there a basic rule that awards points indicating the category of disability that he will be in? You say that it is 100% for the first category.

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I don't have that translation in English.

I'm sorry, but can you repeat the question?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** On page nine, there are categories. Do you have a scale that a soldier can use to see where he fits? For example, if he has lost one, two or three limbs, is there a way to calculate the amount of compensation he could receive?

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** There is a book you can use, depending on the kind of disablement you have. You have the first, the second, and the third categories, but I'm not able to give you the meaning of the six categories because right now I don't know if there is a book like this that you can go to. There is a committee that decides what kind of disablement you have and then the category for the disablement, whether you are in the first, second, third, or fourth category.

Is that the question?

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** I know that it is quite difficult to tell without the book. You are telling me that, for the loss of a limb, points are

already assigned, putting the soldier into a certain category. That is the answer I was looking for.

Does the state provide a normal retirement pension? When that pension is paid, is the military pension scheme affected? Is the state retirement pension reduced?

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I don't know what the difference is between the public compartment and the military compartment, but I can say that in the old age pension, the amount you have at the end of the month is quite the same, because it is 80% of your salary. But there are some bonuses that you can have, so the impact, when you retire.... It's a little bit less, but quite the same. For five years, it is quite the same as the salary. The impact is quite good in retirement.

**The Chair:** Monsieur Lévesque, some of your time was used up for translation. I'll give you another question, if you like.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Thank you.

When servicemen get a regular state pension as well as their military pension, is the military pension affected?

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes, not as the public pension changes, but after five or ten years, it changes. The military pension follows the public compartment after five years in paying for pensions. We are going to reduce the pensions in Italy, so the military pensions have to follow the public compartment.

There are some changes in the public compartment that directly affect the military compartment. It is affected after five or ten years or so, depending on what kinds of changes are made in the public compartment. It's not always possible to make a comparison between the two, because probably in the public compartment they don't gain any bonds. For the military, they do, so we pay a higher contribution for our pension than the public compartment. This is why the military compartment doesn't change as the public compartment does.

• (1615)

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your question, Mr. Lévesque.

[English]

Mr. Stoffer, you have five minutes.

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

Since we have a new clerk here, the previous clerk obviously has been successful in having her baby. Congratulations to her as well.

General, first of all, our condolences to you and the whole country of Italy after the earthquake that your country just went through and the loss of lives there.

Also, sir, congratulations on the fact that you have over 9,000 military personnel serving in 21 countries around the world. That's quite a high number. Congratulations to your country for the international work you do with the UN and with NATO.

My question to you is this scenario. If I'm a corporal and you're a general and we're driving down the road in Afghanistan, and we get blown up and we both die, are you saying that the death benefit to your family would be greater than the one for mine because of your rank?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. It's because of the premium that is paid. The insurance is different.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** I'm just playing devil's advocate here. Wouldn't you be opening yourself up to criticism that says the life of an officer is more valuable than the life of a regular private, for example?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** If you're talking about people, no, but if the premium is different, it's not like an object. If I pay more insurance for my car and you pay less, the premium is different and, at the end, the insurance pays differently. Unfortunately, a lot of people died, and for this, nobody ever complained about this kind of difference in compensation.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** But as a higher—

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]...if you look at the compensation, the compensation is not 100 euros, but I think is very high.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Sure. But as a higher-ranking officer, you could afford to pay more into your insurance than a lower-ranking person could, couldn't you?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Sorry?

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** As a general, for example, you get a much higher salary than a private, let's say, so you could pay more in premiums than a private could, couldn't you?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** The premium is not paid by the people. It's paid by the administration.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Oh, okay.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** It's different.

Also, for the injured, it is not the generals but a lot of people who are of lower rank who are blown up by mines, so this is why, probably.... We pay the insurance for generals so that they never die, I hope. I'm not joking, but—

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** No, no.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** —I don't know why our administration decided on this kind of premium. Probably they discussed it and then decided on this kind of premium.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** That's fine. It's just good to get the differences around the world of what happens in regard to the death benefit.

You also indicated that if a person is single and makes the ultimate sacrifice, whatever benefit there is can then go to their brother or sister if they have no spouse or children. Is that right?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. It's possible that the benefit would go to the family if they have some right. If they don't have the right, they don't have any compensation.

Don't ask me about this kind of right, because I don't know. Sometimes people get it and other times they don't, so probably there is something that works in our system and decides that the brother, sister, or parents can have a benefit of this kind.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** General, there are certain things that money can't cure, and those are psychological problems some of the military people will have when they come back from Afghanistan, Iraq, or somewhere else.

This country is struggling to get qualified personnel to assist our military people and their families. In Italy, do you have that problem? Or do you believe that you have enough trained psychologists to help the military personnel and their families when they come back from a tour of duty?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** It would depend on what kind of disability the people had. If it is a normal psychological problem, they can go to the doctor. We have military doctors, too. In the units, the doctor can recognize if the people have some psychological problems, so he can help the people and also give them indications to go to a psychologist or somewhere, and then they can go. If they don't need.... Inside every unit, we have a doctor who can help.

Also, spiritually, there are priests and other people who can help people. When they come back from operations and have problems, these people can get help from doctors or from other people. We don't have any specialized unit for this.

• (1620)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Does that apply to their families as well?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** When something happens, something like disability or death or something else, yes, but for normal operations, no.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Stoffer.

Now we'll go to Mr. Kerr for seven minutes.

**Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC):** Thank you very much and welcome. We really appreciate your being here and sharing your information with us.

I'm sure my colleagues will ask more about the pension details, but you raised a few things I want to be clear on. One is that you were saying your military is actually reducing their numbers. Is that correct?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. They are going to reduce.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Is that just a military decision that has nothing to do with anything else?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** No. It is a political decision.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** It's a political decision?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes, because the budget is not from the military. We get the money from that, so we are going to reduce because the budget is going down every year. We are going to change our armed forces, but we have to reduce.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Part of what I was going to ask was whether the reduction would be across the board or whether some units would be reduced more than others. Will there be less sea and more land or something like that?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** It depends. Some units that are very big will be reduced. Other units are going to be closed.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Okay.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Looking at the air force, there are some squadrons that will disappear. Some squadrons will be put together with other squadrons to reduce the costs of the unit. They are going to reduce. It depends on the unit. They will have to see everything.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** So we'll stay tuned and watch how it works out, I guess.

You were giving the overall view. I'm almost back to where Judy started off on this one. If you added every possibility together, including the golden handshake, what is the maximum, as against the salary, that a person could receive in pension? In other words, if you took all the combinations and possibilities anyone could do, what's the maximum you could get? Is it 80%? Or does it go up to 100% of salary?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** No. The maximum is 80% of the basic salary, but with some indemnities and some bonds, you sometimes can reach 100% of salary. Don't ask me which kind of indemnity, because in the salaries we have some indemnities that are not pensionable, so they are capped in the salaries. But there are others that, if you go onto the pension, grow from 100% to 110%.

At least, people tell me that when you go onto the old age pension it's much the same, so the salary and the pension are much the same for five years. After five years, of course, they go down, because after five years you go out of auxiliary service, right? If you receive an indemnity, that is the difference between the salary if you stay in the service, and the pension. Seventy per cent of the difference is given to me, so it is something that gives me more money at the end of the month; at least, it's 100% of the salary.

• (1625)

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** So it is 100% because of the other contributions.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. Because of bonuses or something.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Okay.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** That's if you get the maximum pension, of course. If you have less than 80%, and the 40 years of service, you are going to reduce it. You don't have the same salary available.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Okay.

Maximum retirement is at age 60 unless you're the most senior of officers, and then, you mentioned, it's at age 65.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** For me, as a brigadier general, it's 60. For a major general, it is 63 years, I think, and for a lieutenant general it is from 63 to 65.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Okay, and they're calculated up to 65. They're not eligible for the old age pension until they reach that particular year of 63 or 65.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Sorry?

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** With the normal retirement at 60, you'd be automatically eligible for the old age pension part.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** But if you're in the category you're talking about, which is 63 or 65, you're not eligible for that old age part of it until you reach that age. Or do you get your old age pension at 60 regardless?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** No. You get the pension if you go at 63 or 65. I'm not sure I understand your question.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Let me think on that. I'll get back to you in the next round. I was looking at everybody reaching the old age pension at age 60, but yet was there this category that could go up to age 65?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** No, it's not a category. It depends on the rank.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** So that's separate from the old age pension.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. It is the rank. It is not the category. For all the pilots who are brigadier generals, the maximum age is 60. For pilots who are major generals, it is 63. For three-star generals or the chief of the defence staff, it's 65. When you reach those stages, you have to go on pension.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Then they have to get out of here.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** I get you. All right.

On the blending of the public and the military, we won't go into that in any detail, but I understand that there is that relationship. I do have a question. Other than the pension side of it, are there other services provided to the military or retired military? Peter referred to medical services, and stress, perhaps mental, and so on. Are there other programs available, particularly to those who have been injured?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes and no. After their retirement, they can stay in the association. You can't have more of a pension, but you can have more benefits for medical, for insurance, and for a normal life.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** If you came from the military?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes, if you came from the military. If you are from another department, no. There are probably other associations for those people.

But for the military, after retirement we have a lot of people who are in a lot of associations, and they stay together. It's a very big number, so if you go with this big number to the insurance and ask for some fringe benefits, the insurance will probably give you some.

If you are in these associations, you have these kinds of fringe benefits, but it is not mandatory to go into these associations. It is voluntary. It is not from the state. It is private.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Does that go back to the fact that you paid premiums as an individual and that gets you into the association?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes.

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** Okay. So that's where the blending comes in.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes, but I don't know—

**Mr. Greg Kerr:** You're going to shut me off, Mr. Chair, aren't you?

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kerr. Your seven minutes are up.

Now we'll go back to the Liberal Party and Mr. Andrews.

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Thanks for coming today and giving us an overview of your service.

I wanted to follow on with what Mr. Kerr was alluding to, and go a little further in depth, and that is the auxiliary service. Did you say that it's possible to be called back into service?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes.

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** For what time period?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** When you have been in the auxiliary service for five years. The day after, you can come into service. Mostly it's for six months. You can stay in service for one or two years, but that's difficult. You would probably stay for about six months. After that you can come back for another six months or so or at least one year.

• (1630)

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** That would be after the age of 60. What types of services would you have those people do?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** They would be the same services, not operational, of course, but you could be on some committees or in the office. It would not be as a commander, but like other people who are working.

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** What percentage do you have right now?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I have very few people, because when you call people back into service, you have to pay them. They go out of the service and then you have to give them the pension at the end of the month. Also, it costs a lot, because you have to pay as if they're in service. Our organization doesn't call a lot of people back into service. They would just call a few people to do some courses or something. I think the percentage is 0.1%. It's very low. There are very few people.

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** When they're called back into service, do they pay into the insurance program again?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Insurance if they go into operations?

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** Yes.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** It's difficult, but if you go into operations, yes, of course, our organization pays the insurance premiums. For all the people who go abroad and are in service, the insurance covers you. Not here in Canada and not in Brussels, but if you go into an operational theatre, the insurance is mandatory.

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** You're doing 33 missions in 21 countries. We've briefly talked about a soldier coming back from one of these duties. How much post-traumatic stress syndrome do you see in your force right now? Is it a big concern to your force now?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** For some people, yes, because there are some categories where there are not enough people. There are people going abroad two or three times in a couple of years. That is a lot.

There are people who go into operations for six months and then for four years don't go, but there are people who go every six months. After six months, they stay home, and then they have to leave again. For these people, it is stressful to go abroad. For these people, our organization reduces the period they stay abroad so that

it is not six months, but two or three months. We are going to reduce the stress of these people in this matter.

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** How many diagnosed cases of post-traumatic stress disorder in your forces do you have right now?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I'm talking about the air force, because I don't have any percentages for the others. There are just a few people who come back and then have this kind of problem. If they have this kind of problem, they don't go abroad any more.

**Mr. Scott Andrews:** So right now you say there are only a few. Do you think there are many soldiers there who may have this but aren't diagnosed? Is it an increasing problem?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** No. In the beginning, we had a lot of people who volunteered because there was extra pay there, but when people discovered that it was not so easy to stay abroad, then you had a period when people refused to volunteer. Now it is mandatory for at least 80% of people, but for people coming back, there are just a few cases where there is stress about operations abroad.

Sometimes people are more stressed doing normal service than they are staying abroad. People change a lot when they go abroad. They stay together and work together. It is more powerful than when they stay in service—

• (1635)

**Ms. Judy Foote:** What's normal service?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Sometimes we don't have a problem abroad, but we have some problems when they stay in normal service. I don't know if you understand this.

**The Chair:** Mr. Andrews, I'm sorry, but we're well over the five minutes. We'll have to get to that in the next round. Time is not elastic, unfortunately.

*Monsieur Crête, vous disposez de cinq minutes.*

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bonotto, are there comparative tables showing similar situations in major European countries? As an expert in the area, do you have tables of that kind that would let us see whether the numbers are approximately the same? For example, you mentioned 100,000 euros within 10 days of a death. Is that intended to standardize the rules, or does each country operate individually?

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I do not have a comparison with other nations. I don't know if there is this kind of insurance for the people of France or Germany who go abroad.

We decided to do this because the state wanted to indemnify the people with something like that. Our organization does this, but I don't know if they checked abroad to see if any other nation does this. Sorry, but I don't know if the other countries, Canada or the others, have this.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Are there organizations in Italy established to defend the rights of military veterans that could send us an evaluation of how effective these programs are?

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Sorry, but which problem?

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Basically, I want to know if you have evaluations showing the satisfaction rate among retired or disabled veterans, even the families of those affected. Has an evaluation been done to measure satisfaction with these programs?

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I don't know if people are satisfied. Sorry.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** So you do not have that...

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** If you are looking at the newspapers, sometimes the newspapers can come out with a release saying that something is not working properly. We have had a few cases where people were not satisfied. I think there were just two or three cases.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** It is somewhat the same in Quebec and in Canada. The cases you read about in the papers are the marginal ones that cause the greatest frustration.

Has the entire system had new legislation or regular updates in the past? Or has the model been in existence for a number of years with just some adjustments to the amounts?

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I don't know.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Italy has taken part in two world wars as well as in foreign conflicts, specifically in Africa. The historical aspect is very important. In that context, is this scheme seen to meet the needs of the beneficiaries?

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I'm not sure that I understand the question, but people in Italy, since 1985, have decided to go abroad and so on. They go to Somalia and everywhere now. The military goes abroad because they are tasked to do it. They are satisfied to go there. They're not complaining about the operation. For the military, the government or the state decides, and then the military goes abroad.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** I understand that, but I would like to know whether Italian society feels that these programs are fair when a soldier is wounded, loses his life or retires.

• (1640)

[English]

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Since the military has been doing missions abroad, the citizens have more satisfaction because they look at the end results. They are doing something that is different from just looking out from inside the gates, like during the Cold War, when the people stayed inside and did nothing. The satisfaction of the citizens was not so good then. Starting from 1985, when the military went abroad, the citizens saw the military doing something positive and the satisfaction of the Italians improved. There is no

discussion about why we went to Iraq. The citizens see the military forces do this and they are satisfied, because they know the military does its work very well or well, depending....

**The Chair:** Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Crête.

Unfortunately, I've done the same thing that I've done in the past and have followed the second cycle, so there are two Conservative spots now, because I should have gone from a Liberal to a Conservative and then back to the Bloc. Actually, there are three, so Mr. Lobb will be next.

Mr. Lobb.

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Thank you very much, General.

In Canada, one of the programs we have is the veterans independence program. It provides services to veterans for some basic functions, such as hearing aids for those with hearing impairment. It also provides financial support to veterans who still live at home for items such as lawn maintenance and shovelling snow and for a number of different services. I've wondered if there's a similar program in Italy that you provide to your veterans.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Are you talking about training, about tactics?

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** No. I'll generalize here, but this would be for veterans from World War II who are quite elderly but still live at home and want to maintain a degree of independence. Our government provides them with a certain amount of funding dollars to help with their lawn maintenance and other things around the house and that type of thing. Do you have anything similar?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes, we have it for the military. You're saying it's something you give to the military because they have been in service?

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Well, yes, it's for veterans who are probably in their eighties. It's for World War II veterans who choose to stay at home but need a little assistance. Do you have a similar program?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I don't think so. I've tried to remember, but I don't know. Sorry.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** There's another thing that I had a question about. When you're classifying a percentage of disability or injury, if a veteran or a person who is serving is not satisfied, is there an appeal process?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes, if the people are not satisfied with the category they're in, they can complain. There is another committee that looks at whether or not they are in the correct category, to see if they have to change, to go up or down. It depends. It's possible. When they receive their category the first time, people probably don't want to be in that category and want to be posted in another category.

Going through the service categories, when you are in category 8, you can stay in service, but if you go down to category 7, you probably have to leave the service. Taking that into account, sometimes when you go down through the categories you will not be able to stay in the service any more, because of disablement or something like that. People sometimes prefer to accept their category, stay there, and then ask for a job in the service, but if you go down in the categories, you'll probably have to leave the service.

But you can apply to have your category changed if you don't agree with it.

• (1645)

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** As well, there are three classifications of pensioners, as I understand from your presentation: past, current, and future. Besides the change in conscription, was there any motivation behind the change? Was it financial or political?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** The first time it changed, in 1991, a lot of people disagreed, because it changed a lot. We were passing from a pension calculated on the last salary to, in the future, one that would not be calculated on your average salary over your lifetime, and your pension would go down. At the beginning, people didn't agree with the change.

It affected not only the military, but also all of the compartments. The military changed a little bit later, because they had a buffer of four or five years. For the others, there was not this kind of buffer. We accepted it in the end, because after 18 years of service.... The people have about 22 years of service before they get the pension. The people didn't realize a lot of this.

Now the people who join the armed forces have the other kind of pension, so they're not thinking about this. The only thing people are thinking about is that if they don't have 18 years of service after that date, they'll probably have to buy a house with their salary. With the previous pension, they were able to pay for a house at the end of their service. This is a difference, because in 20 years, your pension will probably not be the same as the salary you gained every month, but will be half. If you earned 1,000 euros, you'll probably have a pension of 500 euros. That is the future of our pensions.

Now, every time we go to discuss pensions, we realize it's a very big amount of money the state has to give to people, because lifespans are now longer.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Lobb.

Thank you, General.

Mr. McColeman for five minutes.

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, thank you, sir, for being here.

I want to go down the road on this so that I can understand the history of the benefits you have supplied. It seems from your presentation that this is basically private insurance that is paid into. I'll just confirm that. Which insurance company provides the benefits? Is it a private insurance company or a government-owned insurance company?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** For the missions abroad, it's private insurance.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Was there ever a time when the Italian government actually provided those benefits and the benefits weren't purchased from a private insurance company?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** For the military, yes. This kind of insurance started 10 years ago for us. Every year, an application is made so that all of the insurance companies can participate.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Okay. So they can compete to be the company—

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes, they can compete, and every year, probably, they change.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** —providing the benefits.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Okay. So it's very similar to the private insurance, life insurance, or even automobile insurance that we have here in most of the country. I wanted to get that distinction straight and make sure that there wasn't a government agency backing up the amount of money being paid out. It's actually paid out by a private insurance company.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** But you never hear that this insurance doesn't pay because of something happening, so—

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** They're good—

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** If there are a hundred or a thousand people injured—I hope not—it can happen that the insurance is not able to pay, because with \$4 million to \$5 million for premiums every year, I think, I don't know if they would be able to cover all the injured, but right now, they cover all the time.

• (1650)

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Sure, and isn't that their job as a company providing a product? They need to be sure that they know their business in the sense that they cover the cost of doing business and make a profit to provide the benefits at the end of the day. Otherwise, there's no sense in even competing in the first place. I wanted to be very clear about that distinction.

I also have a general comment. I hope you understand what I'm going to ask here. It seems to me that the changes may have resulted from situations in which there was just too much cost in the system. Is that correct? In regard to some of the thresholds to qualify, when we got to that section, the 40 years of service as a threshold to qualify seemed very high to me. Now, at a certain point, might that have been lower? Was this ever lower than 40 years to qualify for it?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Was it lower than 40 years?

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Yes. Was it 40 years of service for the maximum benefits?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** No, I think that—

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** It's always been 40 years. Okay.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I'm thinking that it is possible to leave, but you won't be paid the maximum.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** Yes.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** You have to reach the 40 years.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** For the 80%. Okay. That's fair enough.

Also, to meld this in, the comment about having to reduce the size of the military was that it's budgetary. It had to do with the fact that there's perhaps not enough money in the national budget to support the military operations you currently have. Is that correct?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** The budget is going to be reduced. For our size, that is the budget we have, at least when we look at other nations. The budget has 50% to pay the personnel and 50% for research, development, maintenance, and so on. If the budget goes down, you have to pay the personnel, so the amount goes from 50% to 51% to 52% to 53%. If you want to maintain 50%, you have to reduce the strength of personnel.

You reduce a lot. After conscription, you reduced a lot of people. Before, it was mandatory that every person had to join the armed forces. Without conscription, only the volunteers join the armed forces, so you lose an amount there.

We are still waiting now. They are going to reduce our strength. In 1970, 1972, 1975, and 1980 a lot of people joined the armed forces, because the thinking was, okay, you have a lot of money. We are still waiting for these people to go into retirement. Probably we are going to reduce those numbers, but in 10 years or so.... Of course, if the budget is more, you can have more people. You can have a lot of—

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** So what you're—

**The Chair:** Mr. McColeman, I'm sorry, but your time's up.

Unless Madam O'Neill-Gordon will give you some of her time, that has to be it.

For five minutes, we'll have Madam O'Neill-Gordon.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for being with us today.

I'm going to go back down the road my colleagues went down previously. If we have a veteran and his wife who are 75 or 80 years old and are not really capable of doing things in their home like dishes and laundry, just the normal cleaning, can they have someone come in and provide this service to them as a result of being a veteran?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** It's not official and not from the state, but there are other kinds of associations that can help these people. It is not from the state. The state has aid for them after they reach 65 years of age, when it is free for everybody, but if you need another kind of care, the state doesn't give veterans extra—

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** There are no extra privileges.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** No. There is nothing extra for them, but some associations do a lot of jobs that the state is not able to do because there isn't the money for that. These kinds of associations can help veterans who are not able to provide for themselves and they may also pay for hospitals, for a maid, and probably for doctors, but that is not official.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** It's not paid for by the government.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** No, it is not paid for by the government.

• (1655)

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** It's just paid by a local association?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** The government pays only when it is official, so if a person gets help, it is not because he is military but because he is an Italian citizen. All Italians are treated the same.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** I have another question. If you have a spouse and his wife and he's drawing his veteran's pension, does she continue to receive that pension at his death?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Yes. It's called a pension of *reversibilidad*. The pension goes from the husband to the wife.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** It goes to the wife and it continues for...?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** It depends. If the wife has another pension of a reasonable amount, probably there is some cutting, but the pension goes to the wife.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** Does she receive less of it? Does she receive the same?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** I think she does, but I am not sure about that. She probably does. It's called a pension of *reversibilidad*. I don't know what it is called in English when the pension goes from the husband to the wife. Also, that is not only for military men. If you are a civilian or in another compartment, sometimes the pension goes to the other partner. It would be possible for it to go from the wife to the husband. It depends on who was working.

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon:** Okay.

That's fine, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Do you have another follow-up question, Phil? You have one and a half minutes.

**Mr. Phil McColeman:** I'm a little curious. My earlier questions were leading to how this eventually affects benefits to veterans. In my mind, this is really a user-pay system in the sense of private insurance providing the benefits.

At the end of the day, how does that reflect on veterans? Does it provide, in your mind, as good a system as could be provided if it were handled differently, if it were handled by government institutions?

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** We don't have veterans, so the amount of pension compared to you.... After some years, your pension is indexed as a member of the public, as they all are. You have no possibility of having something different because you are military, because we don't have any veterans. If you have another pension because you paid into insurance or something when you were younger, you can have more. But that is aid from yourself, not because of the state. That's all.

We have a war pension because we have some injured, where something has happened. Otherwise, you can use a year of war to add a year of work. It is possible to do this because you have served the state. If it was a year, you can add a year to pensionable service, but not for other kinds of....

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. McColeman.

Mr. Stoffer.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** No, thank you, I'm fine.

**The Chair:** Okay.

I understand there are no more questions on the Liberal side.

Monsieur Lévesque or Monsieur Crête?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** It is fine.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** General, thank you very much. We greatly appreciate your being with us today.

To echo Mr. Stoffer's words, we wish the best to your country for your recovery after the natural disaster that your citizens just experienced. Please send our best to all of them.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Thank you. I'm sorry for my bad accent and my bad English.

**The Chair:** General, I do have one question. Is there someone who might be able to get some answers for us on a couple of key questions if we followed up afterwards?

• (1700)

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** Oh, yes. Just send me an e-mail. You can be sure that I will get the correct answer.

**The Chair:** I think I have this right: *molto bene*.

**BGen Sanzio Bonotto:** That's right.

**The Chair:** Mr. Stoffer.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Chairman, seeing as how we had the great news of our previous clerk having a wonderful child, I wonder if it's possible that the committee could agree to send her some flowers.

**The Chair:** Mr. Stoffer, I was going to make sure that you got credit for that idea. I think it's a great idea and I think it falls within our discretion for the budget. I certainly would be on board with it. I can't think of anyone who would disagree.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** And chocolate. She may need some chocolate, too.

**The Chair:** Flowers and chocolate? I think we might be able to get that through.

Mr. Lobb.

**Mr. Ben Lobb:** Mr. Chair, I would move a motion that today's meeting adjourn.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Is everybody okay with flowers and chocolates?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** That's done.

There is a motion to adjourn. Is everybody okay with that?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** The meeting is adjourned.

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