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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good morning, everyone.

This is meeting number 72 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, Tuesday, February 26, 2013. Today our committee meeting is being televised, so I would encourage all members to turn off their cellphones or at least mute them.

We're having a briefing this morning on the report into issues of workplace harassment within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Our first witness this morning is from the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP. The interim chair of the commission, Mr. Ian McPhail, is here.

We welcome you, sir.

We also welcome Richard Evans, the senior director of operations, and Lisa-Marie Inman, the director of reviews and investigations.

We thank you for appearing again before our committee. It's very much appreciated, as is the timely report that you've brought forward for us to study.

I would invite the chair to make an opening statement before we proceed into the questions and, hopefully, the answers for our committee.

Mr. McPhail, please begin.

Mr. Ian McPhail (Interim Chair, Chair's Office, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission): Thank you, Mr. Chair. We appreciate the invitation and the opportunity to be here.

Mr. Chair and honourable members, thank you for the opportunity to share with the committee the results of the commission's investigation into workplace harassment in the RCMP. You will recall that in the fall of 2011, several female RCMP members came forward publicly with allegations of sexual harassment, which raised questions in the minds of Canadians.

Given how fundamentally important public support is to the ability of the police to carry out their duties and responsibilities, I believed it was necessary to initiate a complaint and public interest investigation into the conduct of RCMP members regarding the handling of allegations of harassment in the workplace.

The investigation examined the adherence to RCMP policies and procedures, the adequacy of those policies, the thoroughness and

impartiality of harassment investigations, as well as harassment-related training. In total, the commission reviewed 718 harassment complaints filed between 2005 and 2011.

Overwhelmingly, the problem we found was abuse of authority, in other words bullying. The investigation also revealed that most of the alleged harassment occurred between regular RCMP members. Over 60% of complainants and 70% of respondents were uniformed police officers.

The gender breakdown of complainants was virtually half male and half female, while respondents were predominantly male. The commission's review also found that most of the harassment complaints were dealt with in accordance with the RCMP's harassment policy. However, that policy was capable of being interpreted in a number of ways, which resulted in it being inconsistently applied.

That said, the investigation also revealed that workplace conflict and harassment in the RCMP does exist. As such, the report urged the RCMP to take a number of concrete and measurable steps to improve its handling of workplace conflict and harassment allegations, including revising the harassment policy to be more inclusive; instituting a system of centralized monitoring and coordination of harassment complaints outside of the divisional chains of command; establishing an external mechanism for review of harassment decisions separate from, but not exclusive of, the RCMP's labour relations process; and establishing timelines for the resolution of complaints facilitated by the new authorities granted by Bill C-42.

The commission also recommended that the RCMP develop a comprehensive method to evaluate respectful workplace efforts that is both measurable and quantifiable, and that the evaluation results be made public. All of this is intended to enhance the transparency of the process.

Although the empirical data presented to the commission did not support the widely held belief that the RCMP has a systemic issue with sexual harassment, there is no proof to the contrary. And only if you have what RCMP members themselves see as a fair, open, transparent, and expeditious process will people be more comfortable in stepping forward.

Harassment is a complex problem requiring a complex solution. Policy statements and written procedures are not enough to address the issue. There must be an intent on the part of the RCMP to cultivate a more respectful workplace, and that intent needs to be followed up with actions.

●(0850)

I am hopeful that the commission's report and recommendations will help inform the RCMP in its efforts and further build on the commissioner's recently released gender and respect action plan.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. McPhail, for your presentation, and also for your report. That has been circulated to each member, I believe.

We'll move into the first round of questioning, and we'll go to Mr. Leef, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. McPhail, for your testimony today.

You mentioned in your report that sexual harassment is not systemic in the RCMP. I was just wondering how you generated that conclusion.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Of the 718 files we reviewed, approximately 90% of them dealt with abuse of authority or bullying, 4% dealt with sexual harassment, and approximately 6% dealt with other issues.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Did you deal exclusively within the RCMP, or did you at any point make comparisons with other public service agencies in Canada? I know that not too long ago that a report came out that listed sexual harassment and harassment generally in the public service of Canada. The RCMP was somewhere at the high end of the top 10 in that list. Did you compare the RCMP to the other agencies to generate the conclusion as well, or did you do it solely on the merits of the 718 reviews?

Mr. Ian McPhail: The finding as to whether or not there was a systemic problem was based on the files we reviewed. We also, though, as you mentioned, did compare the experience of the RCMP with certain other police services, and also took note of studies done in the federal public service.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Of the 718, can you maybe just touch on how diverse those were in terms of the geographic regions that the complaints came from, or maybe just give us a bit of a breakdown on how those numbers are representative of Canada as a whole?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Those numbers represented every division, every part of the country. Percentages were higher or lower in different divisions, but the total numbers are not sufficiently large to enable you to make a reliable conclusion.

Mr. Ryan Leef: Would it have been your hope to have more input? Is 718 a decent number for you to feel confident in your report's findings?

●(0855)

Mr. Ian McPhail: A key element of the report's findings was not based on numbers so much, because we also pointed out significant areas where we don't have information. For example, a great many complaints are resolved informally without a harassment file being opened. There's no record kept of that. We recommend that the RCMP do keep records of these informal resolutions of cases because, as it could clearly be significant. The great unknown is those people who, for whatever reason, don't step forward.

Mr. Ryan Leef: And that would not be much unlike any other place. There would probably be similar rates occurring generally,

meaning a certain percentage of people just not coming forward, for whatever reasons.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Exactly.

In terms of anecdotal evidence, because we received submissions from various individuals, both expert, and former and present members of the RCMP, there was a suggestion that some people might be hesitant in stepping forward for fear that either stepping forward could cause damage to their career or because the process itself was so convoluted and lengthy it was simply not something they wanted to get involved with.

Mr. Ryan Leef: You mentioned in your report that one of the recommendations was to establish the timelines set out in Bill C-42.

Do you see the provision under Bill C-42 for dealing with those complaints as a positive step? What sort of timelines would you recommend be put in place using that legislative authority?

Mr. Ian McPhail: I see that as one of the essential steps, as a matter of fact, because the files we reviewed took anywhere from two weeks to four years to resolve. That's clearly unacceptable. We didn't recommend any specific timeline, because that would be the responsibility of the RCMP itself. Nonetheless, we do advocate streamlining of the process because we make reference in the report to the various choices that could be made. The opportunity for appeals or filing of grievances at frequent steps in the process causes it to be slow, cumbersome, and expensive.

Mr. Ryan Leef: I have a final question.

You mentioned that you made some comparisons between the RCMP and other police forces in Canada. I am just wondering how the RCMP compares.

Mr. Ian McPhail: The RCMP compared better than most. That said, as our national police force and an organization that occupies a unique place in Canada, it has to be better.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to the opposition, to Madame Lefebvre.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Doré Lefebvre, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. McPhail, thank you for being here.

I would also like to thank Mr. Evans and Ms. Inman for joining us. It is extremely important, especially following the report we received.

Mr. McPhail, your report concluded that there was no concrete evidence of a systemic problem of harassment, but you yourself admit that the investigation was limited by the commission's mandate and powers. Your report depended on existing complaints and public submissions.

We know that sexual harassment often goes unreported and that more than 200 women filed a class action suit against the RCMP.

Do you think that your investigation was limited by your mandate and the powers available to you? Do you think the problem of sexual harassment within the RCMP deserves to be studied further?

• (0900)

[English]

Mr. Ian McPhail: Thank you for your question. Let me deal with the different issues you've raised.

Quite clearly there are issues that we were not able to investigate due simply to the fact that either people had not stepped forward or files weren't kept, as we say, for cases of informal resolution. The report was not restricted by our mandate—although there's an element of truth there—but also by the terms of reference. Our goal was to do a systemic investigation with the goal of making recommendations that would help the RCMP address this issue.

With respect to some of the well-publicized lawsuits, we had discussions with some of the people involved. We reviewed the documentation on which those lawsuits were based, and it was taken into account and helped inform our recommendations.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Thank you.

An internal document obtained by *La Presse* through the Access to Information Act implies that some employees hesitate to report sexual harassment because they do not trust the current system for handling complaints. It seems to me that, in your opening remarks, you also spoke about members who said that it would be easier to report similar actions if the process were easier.

Since some employees hesitate to report sexual harassment because of the current system for handling complaints, do you share their fears? Do you think this clearly shows that there are gaps in the current system for handling complaints?

[English]

Mr. Ian McPhail: Your questions actually go to the very heart of our recommendations, which is to begin by centralizing the record keeping.

For example, it took us some time to be able to identify the various harassment files. I can tell you that the RCMP was totally cooperative in providing us with those files, but the files were in the various divisions. We believe it is important, if for no other reason than as a management tool, that senior management of the RCMP have access to this information, which until now they have not had. So we recommended that the maintenance of the files be centralized.

We also recommend that records be kept of cases of informal resolution. We advocate streamlining the process. We advocate the appointment of a senior officer of the RCMP, outside of the divisional chain of command, to be responsible for issues of harassment. We advocate subsequent outside review of the RCMP's handling of these matters.

All in all, our recommendations go to addressing how the process should be handled, with a goal of making it much more open, fair,

transparent, and expeditious. It is our belief that if this is done, people with complaints will feel more empowered to step forward.

• (0905)

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: You think these recommendations would probably help resolve the current situation experienced by some employees within the RCMP. Have I understood correctly?

[English]

Mr. Ian McPhail: It's impossible to say that any set of recommendations will absolutely resolve a problem. That said, there's no doubt in my mind that implementation of these recommendations would go a long way towards dealing with this issue.

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

We'll now move back to the government.

Mr. Laurie Hawn, please.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for coming.

Is the perception of systemic sexual harassment in the RCMP just because of misunderstanding between what bullying and harassment are? Is that how this perception has gotten out there?

Mr. Ian McPhail: It's difficult to say why the perception is out there. We didn't address that issue. We took the approach that we were going to deal simply in facts, and our report is very much fact-based. We went where the evidence led us.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I realize this will call for a kind of value judgment, but there was a lack of info on many of the complaints because they were informal, not recorded, and so on.

Would it be logical to assume that if any of those were serious cases, they would have taken on more of a formal than simply an informal process?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Generally, that would probably not be an unfair conclusion.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: So is it somewhat logical to suggest that there weren't any time bombs in that group of informal complaints?

I know you can't give a positive yes or no, but...

Mr. Ian McPhail: It's a difficult question to answer because, of course, it's hypothetical.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Yes.

You talked about use of former members. These would be retired members, presumably, with potentially decades of experience.

Would you like to see more of that? Do you find these people more or less subjective than, say, current serving members?

Mr. Ian McPhail: The interesting thing there was that in terms of the interviews we conducted there wasn't very much difference between former members and current members. Their perceptions were pretty similar.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Would this suggest to you that current members are not very afraid of retaliation? We have talked about the impact on careers. Former members might feel a bit freer to criticize, and so on. But if they had more or less the same objectivity, would that—?

Mr. Ian McPhail: I think you have to give people confidence that there would be no retaliation. That matter is addressed in one of our recommendations.

That being said, it would appear that the bigger reason for people not stepping forward was the length and the convoluted nature of the process.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Recommendation 4 reads: "That an external mechanism for review of harassment decisions be implemented."

Can you describe what that external mechanism might be?

Mr. Ian McPhail: We attempted not to be unduly prescriptive; however, in terms of reviewing how harassment complaints were handled, I believe that an appropriate body would be the new review and complaints commission contemplated by Bill C-42.

• (0910)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: In recommendation 6 you suggested "That harassment investigators receive mandatory specialized training in respect of conducting investigations into workplace conflict and/or harassment prior to being tasked with such investigations."

Who would conduct that kind of training?

Before you answer that, other large organizations may have gone through similar challenges. Did you look at reaching out to any of those organizations for some expertise in how to deal with situations like this?

Mr. Ian McPhail: This is an operational matter for the RCMP, and the RCMP would have to decide whether it has the resources or would need the assistance of outside organizations.

At first glance you might ask why an organization containing many thousands of trained investigators would need outside assistance. It is because of the different nature of a harassment investigation. Generally, police officers are trained to gather evidence to support a criminal prosecution. With respect to harassment investigations, the goal is to gather evidence, yes, but with the goal of solving problems if possible, and if necessary moving on to a formal complaint mechanism.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: People within that same organization would obviously have a similar mindset. There are other organizations—big military or paramilitary organizations, such as the Canadian Forces, for example—and there might be something that could work either way. If the CF were having a problem, having somebody with a similar philosophical bent in terms of law and order and discipline and so on might be useful in going across to their side.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Indeed, that would make eminent good sense, because the Canadian armed services did have issues in this regard, which they addressed in a very forceful and determined manner.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: If there were some perceived need, do you think that the RCMP would be receptive to something like that? I'm not speaking on behalf of the Canadian Forces, but do you think they'd be receptive to that kind of approach?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Again, you're asking me to speculate on what the RCMP's reaction might be. I can only say that what we've all heard publicly and what I've been told privately is that the RCMP is absolutely determined to deal with this matter.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hawn.

I will move back to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Welcome back to the committee, Mr. McPhail.

Obviously, there's a cost associated with your recommendations, but as I understand it, it wasn't really your role to cost out the implementation of the recommendations.

As an aside, these are excellent recommendations, and I hope the RCMP will devote the resources required to implement them fully—but again in an environment where there are cost constraints and the government is cutting the RCMP, and there are the other demands on the RCMP that we have heard about, especially in our study on the costs of policing. I have my doubts that the recommendations will be fully implemented to the extent you would like because of cost constraints. But that's not really for you to comment on, I guess.

Regarding recommendation number six, are there harassment investigators at the moment?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Yes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Who are these harassment investigators? Are they line managers who have a part-time responsibility for looking into harassment complaints, or are these specialized, dedicated roles within the organization?

• (0915)

Mr. Richard Evans (Senior Director, Operations, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Public Complaints Commission): The short answer would be that it's a combination of both.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's a combination of both, and they don't receive any kind of specialized training at the moment?

Mr. Richard Evans: No, there is formal harassment training offered by other, outside agencies from the RCMP. An RCMP member, as a trained police officer, as Mr. McPhail said, can be assigned a harassment investigation. In addition to that, elsewhere there could be specialized resources trained externally.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay, but there is training at the moment for sure.

Mr. Richard Evans: Yes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Is it just that you feel it's not mandatory or it's not specialized enough?

Mr. Richard Evans: Well, if I can follow up a bit, we're blurring two different kinds of training. Our recommendation that specialized training be given to all harassment investigators was made, as Mr. McPhail said, because harassment investigations have different components than criminal investigations.

The second part of the training piece concerns the RCMP's training overall on sensitivity around harassment issues. Members get training when they go to Depot and are recruits. There are several levels of training throughout a member's career, and what we found in the report was that the training is excellent but it's just not given to enough members. So our other recommendation is that the training be given to as many members as possible. Ideally, every member of the RCMP should be trained not as a harassment investigator but about the issues of harassment and sensitivity training.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay, but we're talking here about investigators per se. Harassment investigators receive mandatory, specialized training in respect to conducting investigations. So at the moment their training isn't sufficient, or not enough of the investigators receive the training for whatever reason. It may be a lack of funding or what have you.

Mr. Richard Evans: The reason, as Mr. McPhail said, is that it's an organization of police officers. So they're not required by Treasury Board policy to have the mandatory training because they're police officers.

What we're saying is that it shouldn't get them out of having the mandatory training.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Right, okay.

That brings me to the issue of Treasury Board guidelines. I'm told this is a very complicated aspect of the problem currently, the fact that there are two sets of complaints processes, if you will. I was wondering if you could elaborate on that and the interaction between the two and how the fact of having two complicates matters even more.

Mr. Ian McPhail: That's a key element, which is why we looked at the process. The Treasury Board guidelines at play here, combined with the RCMP's internal rules, tend to make this process unwieldy. There are multiple processes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: When it comes to a sexual harassment complaint, for example, does the force use the Treasury Board process or the RCMP process? I was told by someone at committee when we were studying Bill C-42 that if it's sexual harassment, they have to move from the Treasury Board guidelines to some RCMP process. Is that the case?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Yes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: But that makes it much more complicated, I guess.

You mentioned informal reporting and how records should be kept of informal complaints. On the surface that, of course, appears to be an excellent recommendation. Have you thought about the law of unintended consequences? If you say you're going to keep records of all informal complaints, those could be anything from someone

walking into their supervisor's office and saying they don't get along with the person sitting next to them and find them a bit rude, to....

Do you think the requirement to record informal matters might create a chill in the organization whereby some people might think that if they walked into the supervisor's office with a complaint, the next thing they would know is that it was then part of a file somewhere, which they didn't mean to happen, simply because it concerned a clash of personalities? I don't know if that's a legitimate scenario, but have you thought about that as well?

• (0920)

Mr. Ian McPhail: Yes, we have considered that because you're quite right. You always have to be cautious of having unintended consequences. If a matter is subject to informal resolution, I would not anticipate the file being of the same nature as that for a formal complaint investigation. That said, the senior officers of the RCMP simply do not know what's going on in that regard.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your questions, and we welcome Madame Day to our committee. You have five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here.

In your office, 718 files have been opened. But according to popular belief and communications, for each complaint filed, there are 21 people who have not filed a complaint. With some quick math, that gives us a total of approximately 15,078 possible complaints.

When the systemic problem of harassment in the RCMP comes up, people often wonder if it is a myth or a reality.

On that, I will quote the conclusion of your report.

[*English*]

The Chair: Go ahead, Madame Day, your time is running out.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: It states the following:

...the simple perception of the existence of systemic poor treatment of employees by colleagues and supervisors regardless of gender, ... is itself sufficient to have a negative impact on both public confidence and the manner in which the police are regarded.

Be it myth or reality, we can say that there is a systemic impact. I am a little stunned. In fact, it's always the same: the guilty parties are often better protected than the victims. Attempts are made to resolve the complaint before it becomes public and ensure that the people involved come to an understanding, so that there is no complaint and it doesn't go any further.

When someone steals a single litre of milk from a grocery store, that person is arrested. We go to great lengths for a litre of milk. This is a matter of harassment. It's serious, and not something to be taken lightly. The RCMP's overall reputation is at stake here. It's really serious.

You spoke about supervisors. How many of them are men? How many of them are women? And how many people are considered? Are any of the supervisors women and, if so, what percentage?

[English]

Mr. Ian McPhail: Madame, you have a number of questions there.

Approximately 18% of the members of the RCMP are women. In terms of the percentage of supervisors, it's my understanding that the percentage is not dissimilar. But I must admit that I was perhaps confused by your statement that there were 20 unreported cases for each reported case of harassment. That's not a number I'm familiar with.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Let's make things clear. I said that, according to popular belief, for every complaint filed, a number of people who thought the same thing do not file a complaint. I did not say there were unreported cases in the RCMP.

I would like to know whether, when a complaint is filed about someone, is that person systematically told?

• (0925)

[English]

Mr. Ian McPhail: When a complaint is filed it depends on the nature of the investigation. If it goes to a formal hearing, yes, they certainly would be told.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Is the victim protected?

[English]

The Chair: Is the victim protected? That is her question.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madame Day.

We'll now move back to Mr. Norlock, please, for five minutes.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you to the witnesses, thank you for appearing today.

Sir, did you do a good job in this investigation, and did your report reflect what actually occurred?

Mr. Ian McPhail: I'm sorry?

Mr. Rick Norlock: Did you and your team do a good job on this report, and does it accurately reflect what you and your team learned?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Yes, I'm very proud, as a matter of fact, of the job we did.

Mr. Rick Norlock: In your report does it not say that you did not find systemic harassment in the RCMP?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Yes, it does.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

If somebody were to infer that there is, that would be their opinion based on whatever investigation they did, if anything. Would that be correct?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you, sir. That's very good, because we recently heard here that there are 20 people who don't report something for every one who does. Is that an accurate reflection of what you heard in your investigation or that it indicates might be happening, or does any other external agency or set of facts lead you to believe that's an accurate number?

Mr. Ian McPhail: We found no facts to suggest that was the case.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

In any of your investigations, did you ever hear from a senior or junior member of the management team of the RCMP who indicated that cost constraints affected their ability to investigate harassment complaints?

Mr. Ian McPhail: Again, costs were not an issue, costs were not raised. If I can address that further, because Mr. Scarpaleggia raised this question, we were quite conscious in making our recommendations as to the costs involved. It's our opinion that our recommendations would not result in significantly increased costs to the RCMP. It's also our belief that by simplifying the multiple number of complaints processes, and by not losing the services of members who have left the RCMP or who have gone on sick leave—and there are a number, because that is an issue as well—those are significant costs to the RCMP that can be avoided.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

Please let me know if this an accurate statement. Your report notes that “allegations of harassment within the RCMP workplace are not a new phenomenon.” Indeed, in an internal survey conducted during the 1990s, a number of RCMP members reported they had been the victim of sexual harassment in the workplace.

If that's an accurate statement about sexual harassment in the workplace since the 1990s—and we're talking about a quarter century here, some 25 years—would you say that, based on your analysis and investigation, the incidence of sexual harassment is increasing? We have to use percentages because there may be more, and the RCMP is the largest employed police force in the world. Noting as well, simply by way of statement, that in society today people are more apt to report sexual harassment today than 10 or 15 years ago, is sexual harassment on the increase? Would you say that's correct? Please feel free to give reasons.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Sure.

Very simply, what we stated is that this is not a new issue. It's very difficult to draw conclusions from the raw numbers, saying either that there's a systemic problem or not. That's why we pointed out that this is the first time that anybody has done a complete review of harassment files.

This is part of a process. It's our belief that if the recommendations we've made are implemented and subsequently monitored, we will be able to get concrete measurements of improvement, as the case may be.

• (0930)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you.

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

We'll now move back to the opposition, to Mr. Garrison, for five minutes.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. McPhail and your staff, for appearing today.

I want to start by saying that on this side we in no way question the integrity of the commission or its best efforts in compiling this report. Given the tenor of some of the questions you were asked a moment ago, I have to use a bit of an analogy: if you're walking along, looking down at the sidewalk and looking for potholes, you'll find no evidence of a pothole in front of you but you will still run into that pothole. I think that's what we have in this report.

You've done a very good job within what you call your terms of reference, in looking at a certain aspect of this problem, which is how the RCMP deals with the complaints it receives. You have not been able to look at the broader question, which has resulted in somewhere between 200 and 300 women filing cases in court about sexual harassment within the RCMP.

Given that you are an interim chair and a part of an organization that lost two personnel last year as a result of a reduction in its budget, were there resource constraints that caused you to limit your terms of reference?

Mr. Ian McPhail: The answer is no because the commission itself established the terms of reference.

Secondly, it's not accurate to state that the commission has had a reduction in its budget. That's simply not the case. It's also, with respect, not accurate to say that the commission has been reducing its complement of employees. I do recall that the issue arose last fall when I appeared before this very committee and explained that we had decided that there was a position in the commission that was no longer necessary and that the individual concerned had actually been very pleased to be offered a retirement package.

What I can tell you is that the commission has been ramping up and hiring additional personnel in preparation for the move to the new review and complaints commission.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you for that clarification.

I want to turn to some of your recommendations. You've made reference to Bill C-42 and, in particular, your fourth recommendation reads "That an external mechanism for review of harassment decisions be implemented". It's my understanding that there is no

such provision for that mechanism in Bill C-42, that it simply creates a possibility that the commissioner might choose to implement that. Is that your understanding?

Mr. Ian McPhail: It's my understanding that Bill C-42 provides the commissioner with the ability to move ahead in some of these areas. The goal of our report is to provide a road map for the commissioner and the RCMP as to how they can deal with this issue. At that point, it's then up to the commissioner and the RCMP to use the powers granted to them by Bill C-42 and the road map provided by this commission to implement necessary reforms.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I think you made some very useful recommendations on training. On this side, we've tried to have an amendment made to Bill C-42 to put mandatory training into the responsibilities of the commissioner. I'm not asking you to take a position on that as an independent commissioner, but again, I guess it's the same situation. You're saying that even though Bill C-42 doesn't require the commissioner to create mandatory training programs, you would advise him to do so.

• (0935)

Mr. Ian McPhail: We would advise the commissioner to do so, exactly.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I guess this is something you may not be able to comment on, but I know that we're looking at reductions in the resources given to the RCMP. Again, Mr. Scarpaleggia raised the question of the costs. It's somewhat difficult sometimes to see how the RCMP will devote resources to things like this in the face of its other duties that, on a day-to-day basis, it has to carry out with fewer resources.

Did you find any evidence of there being resources that could be diverted or shifted into these things?

Mr. Ian McPhail: I actually believe that our recommendations would be roughly revenue neutral, on the basis of there being a significant cost to carrying out an harassment investigation and review extending over four years. That's unacceptable. There's also a significant cost from individual members of the RCMP who have to take sick leave or might choose to leave the service. There's a significant cost to the RCMP from that, and I think it's necessary to balance those costs out.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McPhail.

We'll now move to Mr. Payne, please. You have five minutes.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for coming.

Through the chair to you, first of all, I guess that looking at some of the numbers can certainly get some people very upset about this. My background is in human resources. I worked for an international petrochemical company. This goes back quite a number of years, but as part of a similar process, we started sensitivity training for harassment, sexual harassment, and so on.

I'm just wondering if you know how far back any particular training may have started in the RCMP, or if it is just something fairly new.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Let me give you an example. I had the opportunity to spend a week at Depot in Regina where RCMP cadets are trained. I have to tell you that I was extremely impressed by the high quality of the training, in all aspects, given to the cadets. The training that they're given about harassment is also, I believe, excellent. The training module for managers is also, we believe, very good. The problem is that it hasn't been given to enough people. It needs to be rolled out. The RCMP, to its credit, has actually done a good job, but they need to move forward. They need to take the training programs they have created and continue them. For example, for general members of the RCMP, we advocate online refreshers from time to time. These are not expensive. We advocate that the training module, which the RCMP has already prepared and given to a number of managers, be rolled out to cover all managers, because if managers are in a position to have a certain sensitivity, if you will, to workplace conflict issues, many problems can be addressed before they become serious.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Was it rolled out top-down? Is that how the process was implemented? That's sort of the way we did ours, to make sure that in fact the management was well aware of what the process was, what the rules were, and that they certainly had to buy into that process.

• (0940)

Mr. Ian McPhail: Yes, that would be comparable.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Okay.

Mr. Ian McPhail: I suspect that...but I won't speculate.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Just in terms of the investigations—and I've done some of those as a human resources manager—who maintains these files? Whether it's sexual harassment or just normal harassment, they are highly sensitive files. Obviously that can create some difficulties if...

Mr. Ian McPhail: You're quite correct, they are sensitive files, and that is very good reason for maintaining them in a centralized fashion.

Mr. LaVar Payne: The centralized location would be what, the Depot?

Mr. Ian McPhail: No, Ottawa.

Mr. LaVar Payne: In Ottawa. Okay.

Let me just ask this question. In Alberta, for example, because that's where I'm from, is there somebody on the human resources side of issues who would be looking into these harassment cases? Is it by province or is it by...? I'm just not sure how that might work.

Mr. Ian McPhail: It would be by division, but again the investigations of these should be outside of the normal divisional chain of command in order to avoid the type of conflict that is possible, with people investigating themselves for instance.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Just on—

The Chair: Be very quick.

Mr. LaVar Payne:—your recommendation number 6, what kind of specialized training are these investigators getting? Can you describe that briefly?

Mr. Ian McPhail: There has been some. Specialized training, according to Treasury Board policies, has been implemented for some investigators, but we believe insufficiently.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much, Mr. McPhail.

We'll move to Mr. Rafferty, please.

Mr. Rafferty, I think you will have the final word here today. It's only going to be for about three and a half minutes.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): All right, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll try to ask very pointed questions.

Thank you all for being here.

I'd like to continue with Mr. Payne's questioning. Have you had any indications from Minister Toews, or Minister Clement, more specifically at Treasury Board, that harassment funding will be there as needed in the future?

Mr. Ian McPhail: We haven't discussed that issue, but as I indicated earlier, it's our belief that the cost of the recommendations that we have made, if implemented—

Mr. John Rafferty: Well, there will be some front-end costs, though. You won't recoup all those costs immediately.

Mr. Ian McPhail: That's right.

Mr. John Rafferty: Let me ask you about recommendation number 10, where it says “the online training module, which should address workplace conflict, including harassment, be delivered on a regular basis”. Am I to take it that you believe that online training is better than in-person training?

Mr. Ian McPhail: No, that's not the case. In-person training is better than online training. Online training is better than no training.

Mr. John Rafferty: Okay, I've got it.

Now if I am to assume correctly that you're feeling now that your job is finished, that's it's sort of open and shut, if I could ask you, how will—

Mr. Ian McPhail: Can I step in here?

Mr. John Rafferty: You might want to step in with the rest of my question, because I'm going to ask you, how would you proceed with further study if you had the opportunity? Some time down the road would the commission also like to be part of taking another look at this to see how well things are going?

Mr. Ian McPhail: The answer to the second part of your question is yes. The answer to the first part is no. Let me expand on that.

No, we see this as part of an ongoing process. One report is not going to solve the problem. But as I indicated earlier, this was the first time that anybody has reviewed all of the harassment files the RCMP has, so you have a starting point. I was—

• (0945)

Mr. John Rafferty: I have one last quick question, because I only have three minutes. Has Minister Toews given you any indication that there will be funding for your commission to continue an ongoing look at this issue?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rafferty.

Go ahead, Mr. McPhail.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Actually, Minister Toews, I believe, indicated before this very committee that there would be significantly increased funding.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. McPhail, and thank you to all.

We certainly appreciate your report. It's bound up really well here, and even in mine different aspects of it have been highlighted. So we'll keep that close at hand.

We also have our commissioner of the RCMP here, who's going to give us his response to it.

But we want to thank you for your report and the work that you've done on it, the recommendations and findings, and for appearing before our committee today.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. Ian McPhail: Thank you, I appreciated the opportunity.

The Chair: We will suspend for a minute, allow the witness to take their exit, and welcome the next guests to the committee.

Okay, we'll call the meeting back to order.

This is the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. This morning we're having a briefing on the report into issues of workplace harassment within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Our witness this hour is Commissioner Bob Paulson of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Our committee thanks our commissioner for always making himself available to return to our committee to help us in our deliberations, whatever they may be, as much as they involve the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We know that you've testified here a number of times and we've always appreciated it.

So welcome, and we look forward to your comments. If you would then take some questions from our committee, Mr. Commissioner, that would be appreciated as well.

Commissioner Bob Paulson (Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Members of the committee, good morning.

Last fall the RCMP completed the gender-based assessment that I had requested. The aim of the assessment was to objectively look at our practices and policies for gender bias. This was one of many transformation initiatives launched to bring about positive change in the force. Two weeks ago our action plan in response to that assessment was released.

We have organized our planned work along two themes: work to address the culture of the force and work to address the composition of the RCMP.

[*Translation*]

Our plan includes 37 action items that will, among other things, significantly increase the number of women recruited into the force—with a goal of reaching 30% female regular members by 2025.

[*English*]

We're taking steps to address the lack of faith and transparency in the promotion process, in an effort to build a more welcoming and respectful workplace.

[*Translation*]

Longer term retention of women in the force is also being addressed.

[*English*]

This plan is transformative and quite forward-looking. It will challenge us to meet our goals and require us to be innovative. Every employee has a role to play. I'm confident we will deliver on this action plan and ultimately succeed in meeting Canadians' expectations of the RCMP.

[*Translation*]

Recently, the Commission of Public Complaints released its report into RCMP workplace harassment, for which you have invited me here today.

[*English*]

We all share the view that independent, effective civilian review is absolutely essential for ensuring public trust and confidence in the police force. The CPC's report offers an objective and independent assessment of our performance in this area. The RCMP accepts the findings of the CPC in this matter.

I do find it necessary, however, to emphasize the CPC concluded that:

The empirical data gathered by the Commission based on formal harassment complaints do not substantiate the supposition that the RCMP is experiencing a systemic problem with gender-based or sexual workplace harassment.

● (0950)

[*Translation*]

The CPC has identified, as I think many of us had, serious harassment, discipline and workplace challenges that exist within the RCMP.

[*English*]

While they worked on this important review of harassment in the RCMP so did I, effectively reaching the same conclusions. I've already implemented much change in this area, which addresses the CPC's recommendations—and where I haven't, I'll be working swiftly to do just that.

[*Translation*]

The commission has made 11 recommendations to help us provide a respectful workplace for our employees. Notionally, I accept them all.

The RCMP has already advanced on most of these items. This includes centralized oversight of the harassment complaint process, as well as the development of service standards to guide the harassment process.

[English]

The centralization of the harassment oversight process that I requested last year, supported by a case management tool, has already improved monitoring and reporting capacity, while increasing accountability at every level. It also provides my staff and me the opportunity to see trends and to deploy strategies to avoid future problems.

A new guide on how to deal with harassment will be distributed internally in the coming weeks. This guide will help employees analyze situations that they believe may be workplace harassment, while emphasizing the importance of addressing situations early. All RCMP cadets receive instruction on this topic and the importance of encouraging a respectful workplace during their training at Depot.

[Translation]

We have implemented a mandatory online harassment awareness and prevention training course for all employees, and currently 94% of employees have completed it.

[English]

New supervisors and managers are provided with additional training on managing workplace relations, promoting a respectful workplace, and applying our harassment investigative process. We've finalized and are prepared to distribute our code of ethics, including an industry-standard workplace relationship reporting requirement. Meanwhile, of course, the RCMP continues to face the challenge of working with a legislatively enshrined code of conduct system for members of the force that is antiquated, adversarial, and long on process.

The federal government's proposed Bill C-42, the enhancing Royal Canadian Mounted Police accountability act, if passed, will establish a fair and efficient human resources system that will focus on addressing conduct issues quickly and at the most appropriate management level.

[Translation]

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, I'm here to tell you the RCMP is making progress. We have much to do to truly modernize this institution, but we are doing it. Canadians should recognize that while we are making these changes, we are continuing to deliver on our core mission of keeping Canadians safe in their homes and in their communities.

• (0955)

[English]

It is somewhat akin to changing the engines in the avionics of a big airliner. It's made a little bit more challenging by the fact that it's flying while we're doing it. I'm confident that the men and women of the force are up to it.

[Translation]

I'd be pleased to take your questions.

[English]

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

We'll move to our first questioner for seven minutes.

Mr. Gill, please.

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I also want to thank Mr. Paulson for being here with us this morning.

Would you be able to share with us why the gender-based assessment was conducted, and what was its overall objective, please?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, the gender-based assessment was initiated soon after I came to my post amid the controversies that flowed from the allegations of sexual harassment, predominantly in the west but also in other areas of the force. It was an effort, among other things, to try to get a more objective analysis of what the organization faced in terms of our policies and practices, how we were constructed, and how we have done business. It was an effort to try to objectively collect data that would assess the extent to which gender bias was present in our policies and practices.

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you.

Regarding the action plan released on February 14 that commits the RCMP to concrete milestones, are you confident that you can meet these milestones?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, I am confident. I think it's a very ambitious plan but it's one that I have gone over with my senior executive, with the minister and Public Safety more generally. We're going to need some support, both from within the organization and outside the organization, but I think it's a realistic plan and very comprehensive plan that will address many of the issues before us today.

Mr. Parm Gill: Can you tell us if Bill C-42 will help modernize the RCMP's discipline and grievance policies?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, it will go a long way to modernizing our approach to discipline and the way in which we manage harassment, which is under discussion today, by doing a couple of things, some of which I've already spoken to the committee about.

Essentially, the bill will try to get the earliest possible intervention with the lowest level of management intervention, and ensure that it's done very quickly within a very streamlined process whenever we have to apply discipline or have to manage grievances or complaints in the workplace. So if the bill is brought into force, we will effectively overhaul all of our administration surrounding the discipline and harassment cases to streamline it, to make it more responsive to employees' needs and more consistent, I think, with peoples' expectations.

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you for that.

We actually also heard earlier that there some complaints within the RCMP possibly took as long as four years to complete. Can you tell us what your objective is? What do you see as a fair timeline for addressing some of these complaints?

Commr Bob Paulson: Our goal, as I've stated in the action plan, is to at the very least be compliant with Treasury Board expectations on how these things are to be managed, and they basically shoot for a 12-month process from start to finish.

But let me talk for a second about that four-year horror story which, I think, is the product of a system where in the earliest moment of that issue, people were not able to come to terms with it and deal with the substantive issue that was causing the problems. So at every turn of the harassment process, at every turn of the management response, grievances were filed.

If we're not successful at intervening at the outset of these conflict situations, then what we see is the extreme polarization of both parties—management and the employee—and we're locked in a legal battle that goes on forever. We have a four-year harassment situation that you've mentioned, but we have people who have been off on sick leave for 10 or 11 years, mad at the organization, suing the organization, which is just not sustainable and not a way to manage a police force.

• (1000)

Mr. Parm Gill: Have your managers been told to enforce a zero tolerance policy? What is the value of a zero tolerance policy of sexual harassment in the workplace and what kinds of effects have you seen since its enforcement?

Commr Bob Paulson: The zero tolerance approach needs to be elucidated.

They have been told about it. What I have told my managers, starting from my deputy commissioners on down, is that leaders have to engage in managing their workforce. What it means is that there are going to be consequences for managers and leaders and supervisors who don't act when they observe traits and behaviours of people in the workplace, but also don't act when people make complaints.

That's our approach to the zero tolerance idea, but what we're really shooting for is a fully engaged workforce with all employees alive to the issue of workplace conflict and harassment and who are willing to intervene at the outset when these things are known or can reasonably be known.

As a result, I think we're seeing a much more active management approach to this. I had expected that we would see a spike in some of the complaints, and we may yet, although we have not thus far. But I think we're succeeding in getting the message out to people that you can't just stand by and watch these things happen and not act.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Gill.

We'll move back to Madame Lefebvre. You have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Commissioner Paulson, thank you very much for being here. We greatly appreciate it, especially when the topic is as important and as sensitive as the one we're studying today.

First of all, you spoke a little at the start of your remarks about 37 action items that you want to present to increase the number of women in the RCMP. The Minister of Public Safety sent you a letter last November, I believe, on that very topic, on increasing the number of women in the RCMP.

Do you think you currently have the resources you need to implement these 37 measures that you presented in your plan?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for your question.

I think so. We don't need a lot of resources to do it. We need to change the mentality and change how things are managed.

[*English*]

In other words, I think that it's not necessarily dependent on resources, although some resources will have to be put to it. For example, I recently authorized the full implementation of our new leadership training regime in the organization. That requires resources, but they are resources that are available to me from within the organization. Our recruiting initiative, which will have to target specific groups, particularly women and employment equity groups, may require the injection of some additional people, but they can be found within our HR environment.

So there will undoubtedly be a resource cost to it, but I think it's more dependent on the manager's ability, first, to read the plan; second, to implement the plan; and third, to report on its implementation. So it's more about a changing of a mindset within the organization than it is about pouring more money at it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Thank you.

How do you think the RCMP can encourage gender equality within its organization and recruit more women? Do you have any examples or recommendations in that respect?

• (1005)

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, we will undertake actions. For example, presentations will be made in schools and for women's groups.

[*English*]

We're targeting where the desired group is. For example, I'm not too concerned about going to an intake of 50% women within two years, although many people have been critical of that idea. It's very ambitious. Some people quote the labour market availability numbers as being in the area of 27% or lower. But I don't think it's just a question of issuing a press release saying that we're hiring more women; we have to get into our schools, get into our young ladies' groups, where ladies get together in our communities, such as Girl Guides and other areas, and target these people.

I can tell you that I just did a youth encounters group for the RCMP a couple of weeks ago. There were probably 200 youth in the audience. I'd say that 80% of them were women from across this country. I don't think as much as some people do that the recent headlines and the controversy have scared off women. In fact, I'm seeing increased interest of women in the organization.

But to answer your question specifically, we need to target groups and we need to overcome the impediments that we've been victim of in the past, such as being overly mindful of our contract obligations to try to recruit fairly from across the country. If in reality our target group of women comes from two or three provinces, and numbers are available there, that's where we go.

That's a bit of a foggy answer. I'm sorry about that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: That is very interesting, actually.

You spoke about the mandatory training that you've put online. I have a few questions about that. How did you put that online training in place? How did you make it mandatory for RCMP employees? You said that the training is mandatory and that almost 94% of employees had already completed it. What does that online training consist of?

Commr Bob Paulson: It's a course on harassment, the acts, the regulations, how to manage people. The whole thing is on our computer network.

It's important to keep in mind that the RCMP is a large organization, and that it's everywhere. For example, there are two-person detachments in the north and in the west. So the only way to provide the training quickly was by computer.

[*English*]

The way that we oversee that is through our hierarchy of managers to make sure that people are.... You know, 94% sounds like a good number, but if it's obligatory training I'm sure that somebody might want to ask me why it's not 100%. We're trying to hit 100%.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Do you have some way to evaluate the training once the employees have completed it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Be very quick.

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, we have it in our computer system, of course, so that once a person signs on with their own identity and takes the course, then they don't get credit for it until they've passed the course. It's not particularly difficult. It's the idea of going through the computer-based training to get exposed to all of those ideas.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move back to the government and go to Mr. Norlock, please.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and through you to the witness, thank you for attending, Commissioner.

For our previous witness, there were constant questions about his being able to adequately complete his investigation. The thought was that there might be inadequate resources. Do you envisage there being any problem with adequate funding for you to completely following through on your desire to make sure that we have a harassment complaint policy and procedure within the RCMP that is second to none among police forces around the world?

• (1010)

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I don't think it turns on resources. Certainly the failings that have been identified by the CPC don't arise from a shortage of resources. They arise from a shortage of compliance with our policies and our expectations. As I've said, there are going to be some additional minor resources and tweaking of how we manage ourselves. I don't see the resourcing issue being an impediment to delivering on this action plan.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much, Commissioner.

Please let me know if this is an accurate reflection from your perspective. In Bill C-42, if I recall, there's an additional \$9.8 million to investigate complaints. Based on what you previously said, would you say that the \$9.8 million will go a long way to making sure that you are able to fulfill your commitment towards properly investigating and having those policies and procedures laid down in order to do a good job with regard to harassment?

Commr Bob Paulson: That's right. In respect of Bill C-42, that \$9.8 million will do what you've mentioned, but it will also give us the opportunity to get the training and the awareness out to those NCOs. They're going to have to manage this discipline thing in a way that they've never had to do before, and the centralized monitoring of that will be supported by that money as well.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much, Commissioner, for that.

There was a discussion about computer-based training or electronic training with regard to harassment and sexual harassment, that whole gamut of different types of harassment. Is it not a fact that this route is now used by most agencies to deliver training, especially those agencies that have a deployed personnel or forces?

Commr Bob Paulson: That's true. It's a very effective way of training people, notwithstanding my comments earlier that we're spread out across the country. It's a very efficient way of doing it. The way it's constructed and designed provides very effective training. I can't quote it but I will go on record as saying there's data supporting the effectiveness of this type of training because of the way it's constructed.

Mr. Rick Norlock: One would assume that it's effective training, because that's how universities and colleges and other educational organizations, as well as companies, are delivering it. I'm very much aware of significant companies that do their training of employees electronically.

So from the standpoint of efficacy, you would agree that it's not an issue. But would you also be prepared to state in your directives to your subordinates that should they find that the electronic training is not as effective as other forms—indeed, sometimes there are pockets where it's not as effective—that perhaps there needs to be one-on-one or group training live?

Commr Bob Paulson: That's right, absolutely, and particularly with respect to our efforts to train harassment investigators. My senior leaders, my managers particularly, my COs are getting one-on-one training on that very issue—from me.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much.

Mr. McPhail's report indicated that he could not find—and he was rather specific when he was here just before you—evidence of systemic workplace harassment in the RCMP. I wonder whether you could make comment with regard to that.

Would you also say that as an investigative rule, if you begin an investigation with a certain premise in mind and only ask questions that reinforce that premise and not ones questions that might lead you down another path, or if you ignore certain evidence, you will find evidence? I'm referring to a case in which, if someone wants to say right off the top that there is a systemic problem in the RCMP and only goes with that in mind, they're going to come up with that. But in an independent, objective investigation, one comes up with a certain result.

I'm asking you, I guess, whether from your perspective you feel that in the RCMP there is systemic harassment, sexual harassment in particular.

And have you looked at other police organizations with regard to best practices in delivering education, in delivering training, and in training investigators and developing those policies and principles?

• (1015)

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would say that I don't feel that there is a systemic problem of sexual harassment in the RCMP. There are some very public and well-known cases of allegations of sexual harassment in the RCMP, and that is a blight on the RCMP, frankly.

I do feel, and I've said consistently since I've been appointed, that we have some issues with how we manage authority. I think that's borne out by the CPC's findings. I think we have to modernize that and make changes in how we treat each other in the workplace.

I'm sorry, but I forget the last part of your question, but I had an answer.

Mr. Rick Norlock: I was asking whether you had looked at best practices—

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, we have. What we're doing now, Mr. Chair, is rolling out a respectful workplace program. It's been very effective. A couple of years back here in Ottawa, they did the same thing. A lot of police forces and organizations do this. We're doing it as well, taking it from best practices.

The Chair: We'll move now to Mr. Scarpaleggia for seven minutes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you.

You said something that was rather interesting, Commissioner. You said that in the current system there are grievances launched at every turn.

Could you elaborate on that? What I thought I understood by it was that you have a grievance, the grievance goes to some kind of committee, and then the person who is being grieved against turns around and launches their own grievance. Then it goes to another level, and by that time the originator of the grievance thinks of something else and launches a second grievance.

Is that what you're saying? Is this what you're talking about?

Commr Bob Paulson: Effectively it is, but in the current approach to harassment, an employee makes a harassment complaint, and the response of the organization is to document it, to notify the alleged harasser, to immediately react to and assess what the allegation is. But then a series of decisions are made by management, and if the complainant isn't satisfied with the first decision, he or she can file a grievance, and then the grievance has its own track through the organization. So every subsequent decision that gets made contrary to the interests of the complainant can be grieved.

In fact, I was just flying back from Edmonton and going through a number of these external review committee recommendations, and there are multiple grievances from the same complainant, effectively from the same set of facts. What Bill C-42 will also do is to help us streamline how we manage the grievance process and how we're able to bring it all together to make it a little bit more sensible.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I'm having a hard time understanding how many decisions one could make in the course of one harassment grievance, sexual or otherwise. How many decisions are there to make in that process? Do you have a small example?

Commr Bob Paulson: Here is one, very quickly: I complain about the way you are asking me questions; I feel that you are harassing me. So the chair comes in and has a look at it and says, no, I don't think it's harassment; I think you guys just don't understand one another and I'd like you to work it out.

You then, say, grieve the chair's decision, saying that it is a bad decision and that you have a grievance. It has a separate form, a separate system. We're managing a grievance and we're managing the harassment claim.

Then, perhaps, after the grievance goes forward, we conclude the harassment file, and any decision that's made in that harassment—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Right.

Commr Bob Paulson: So every sort of positive action or negative action gets grieved.

• (1020)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: And you will simplify this system?

Commr Bob Paulson: We will simplify this.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: How would you simplify it in this case?

The Chair: There is no question but that the chair would not be erring. You know that, Mr. Scarpaleggia.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: I see. I've just been reduced from seven minutes to five minutes, I think.

Will the system you are going to create be more like the Treasury Board system? Right now, as I understand it, there are two systems for dealing with complaints. One is the Treasury Board system, and then I believe you have to leave this system in certain cases and move to an RCMP-based system.

What is your system going to look like? Is it going to look more like the Treasury Board system? Is that the better system at the moment?

Commr Bob Paulson: If it's possible, it will exceed the expectations of the Treasury Board guidelines right now.

From that point of view, we'll have two categories of employee. We'll have regular members and we'll have public servants. If you're a regular member, it's going to be streamlined such that we're not going to get into that grievance-discipline-harassment process. It's going to be one system that is going to be managed and administered efficiently.

If you're a public servant, you won't know the difference. I know that there is some discussion about some public servants who feel that the RCMP reaction to some harassment complaints is a bit too criminal investigator-like, but it will be absolutely consistent with the Treasury Board and in some cases more efficient.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: So the Treasury Board system will stay in place for public servants working within the RCMP, or will it be a new system in theory but will essentially be the same one?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay.

And the other system, the RCMP system, will be improved.

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, and it will be brought together to stop this bifurcation of discipline and harassment.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: We have talked a lot about record keeping and gauging costs and so forth. Aside from legal bills, does the RCMP keep figures on such monetary costs of harassment as sick leave, increased use of medical plans, and so on? If not, is this something you would consider as part of a revamping of the system?

Commr Bob Paulson: I think so. One of my key priorities going forward is revamping our information management more broadly in the organization.

But to answer your specific question, we have ways of extracting costs of sick leave and so on. The ability to link them to harassment, though, is not necessarily—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: It's very difficult.

You said that “notionally” you will implement all 11 recommendations from the public complaints body. When you say “notionally”, do you mean that you will implement each recommendation to the degree feasible? What do you mean by notionally?”

Commr Bob Paulson: I'll tell you specifically, Mr. Chair, what notionally means. I don't have a full understanding of their recommendation around the external management or review of harassment complaints. We do have that now: we have external review committee, the Federal Court, the Human Rights Tribunal. They're all external bodies that have varying degrees of activity in reviewing harassment in the force. I don't know what they're talking about there.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Okay. I'm done, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Madame Day.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Day, you have seven minutes. Pardon me, five minutes.

[*English*]

Second round.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Thank you.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for taking steps to improve the situation.

My first question is about the mandatory online training.

How can you know that people have actually completed it? You're saying that 94% of employees have taken it, but did they take a test in a room, be it on a Saturday, a Sunday or a Monday, so that it is clear that they answered the questions?

• (1025)

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you.

When they take the online training, they must read something and then answer questions. If they don't answer certain questions, they have to re-read the material.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Okay, but how do you know that the person in front of the screen is the person who's supposed to be there?

Commr Bob Paulson: Ah, I see. They have a password that allows them to access the system. I imagine that a person could work hard at it and arrange to have someone else take the training in their place, but that hasn't happened yet.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: That would be cheating.

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Recommendation No. 4 indicates that an external mechanism for review of harassment decisions be implemented. This morning, we were talking about a supervisor from another team or another location. Would it not be a good idea—if I may make a suggestion—to give this responsibility to someone representing the person who filed the complaint and the workers, or to a multiparty committee? Wouldn't that reassure the public about how complaints are handled?

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you for the question.

Yes, it's possible, but it's important to try to conduct the investigation as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Most of the investigators, once we're in the investigative stage of an harassment case, are external to the unit that they're in. Occasionally they're not—they may be in the detachment, but they wouldn't be in the work unit. That goes back to my comments earlier, Mr. Chair, around this notion of having external investigative responses to all harassment complaints. I do like your suggestion about committees.

In the west right now, we do have some employee committees that take an active interest in how the harassment complaints and workplace issues are being managed. I think that bears more examination, but it's a tricky area for one to commit to having external investigations in every instance, because it's just not feasible.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Right.

You said that you want to recruit and raise awareness with the target audience, mainly in schools and probably at job fairs and expos. National Defence has already done this type of recruitment in recent years. You're from National Defence. I saw in your CV that you came through there.

Do you have any numbers showing the results of that kind of approach to increase the number of women in the workforce? I would also like to know what percentage of women apply to the RCMP. A lot of women now want to join the RCMP. I would like to know how many of them are accepted and how many are turned down.

Commr Bob Paulson: Once again, thank you for the question.

I don't have the figures on the number of women.

[English]

I don't have the numbers on the success of those outreach initiatives with me, so I can't really speak to that.

We do have the numbers, and I'm not in a position—

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Excuse me, but I think you could provide those numbers to the committee.

[English]

Commr Bob Paulson: Well, if I can, I will. I just don't know that we have that information. I don't know that we measure.... When we go out to a particular community or something and make a presentation to folks, we have a number of people who would respond to that. I don't know whether that information is available. I'll certainly inquire, and if it is available I'll provide it to the committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Commissioner.

We'll now move back to the government side, to Mr. Merrifield, please.

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Thank you for coming in and explaining your perspective on this report.

When it comes to sexual harassment, I think Canadians and all of us feel better that the report shows that sexual harassment within the force—albeit that one case is too many—is not necessarily the major issue. But the report points to bullying and general harassment as a major problem, and if you're going to reach the goal of, I think, 25% more females by the year 2025 as the goal—

Commr Bob Paulson: It's 30%.

Hon. Rob Merrifield: —I'm sorry, 30%—not only are they going to have to feel that the workplace is harassment-free, but so are the males. It's not a gender issue; it's an issue, if you're going into the RCMP as an occupation, of feeling comfortable that you're not going to be harassed in the workplace.

There are two problems, as I see it: one is within the force, in making certain that this is dealt with, and I think Bill C-42 will help, and this report hopefully will help; the second one is that you have a major problem of confidence among the public you're serving, the

problem of making sure that they feel confident this is taking place within the force.

From that perspective, could you comment on both of those sides and on how you're going to get there? Recommendation 11 says that there will be a comprehensive method of evaluation to make certain that it takes place, and that you'll report on in that matter to the public.

Can you give us your perspective on how you're going to accomplish this and then how you're going to report it?

•(1030)

Commr Bob Paulson: Sure. Thank you for that question.

Our action plan addresses many of the issues identified in the CPC's report. We plan to report frequently on our progress. That's an ingredient toward re-establishing and reacquiring the public trust that, as you've described, has been impacted by these unfortunate, unnecessary, and outrageous behaviours.

That's my plan, frankly: to implement the action plan, to report to government and to Canadians on its progress. But I really feel also, going back to my comment around fixing an airplane in flight, that if we concentrate on delivering our core business to Canadians, which is keeping them safe in their homes and their communities—delivering on our operational obligations—that too will begin to re-establish trust and confidence in the force.

The public aspect, demonstrating progress, will be there—as the CPC recommends as well—and we'll see whether we're making progress or not making progress. We've made some benchmarks of reducing harassment complaints, and we'll be held to doing that.

Thank you.

Hon. Rob Merrifield: How would you rate the morale in the workplace today? Is it getting better or worse in the last 12 months?

Commr Bob Paulson: I thought it was getting better recently, but I can tell you, frankly, that I was just in Grande Prairie, where I had a town hall meeting with the folks there, and it's a very busy policing environment in Grande Prairie.

Hon. Rob Merrifield: I come from that area, and I can do—

Commr Bob Paulson: It was smart of me to choose it, then.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Rob Merrifield: I could have told you that there are some problems there.

Commr Bob Paulson: But to the point of your question, the members were looking at me and wondering, when is this over, when are we out? My response is that it will be as soon as everybody is engaged and holding up their end of this thing. I think the men and women of this force, the employees of this organization, love the business of the organization. They love to be free—supported, empowered—to do the work of this police force. When they do it well, everybody's happy, except for the crooks. So that's what we need to do.

To answer your question, I think morale is steady and needs to improve.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Merrifield and Mr. Commissioner.

We'll move back to the NDP. We'll go to Mr. Garrison, please.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Commissioner, for being here today.

Certainly, we do welcome the *Gender and Respect* report. We may have some questions about gaps in reporting. Also, I wish you luck in doing it without proper resources. However, it's a bit like some of the questions I had for Mr. McPhail, in that the report tends to look down rather than at the broader context.

On page 4, you say that the RCMP stands to gain little by denying the obvious. I think there are two big challenges that aren't really addressed here directly and that will in some ways determine the success of your plan.

One of those is the fact you have more than 200 women in class action lawsuits against the RCMP. They don't show up in Mr. McPhail's report because he didn't look at them, so that makes it easy for people to say that there really isn't a problem with sexual harassment that's systemic. I don't care whether the word "systemic" is there or not. There's a problem.

We have that one, and you have also have the recent human rights report on missing and murdered aboriginal women, which says, whether you agree with the report or not, that women don't come forward because they don't trust the existing system.

I guess that's my question. How do you plan to address these two really big challenges that provide a context which would seem to me to determine whether you can succeed in recruiting more women in the RCMP?

• (1035)

Commr Bob Paulson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me start right away by separating those two issues that you've linked together there. I see them as completely separate. I can see how you might want to bring them into the same sentence, but women in the organization need to have confidence in a safe work environment, and that's the thrust of our action plan, not just for women, but for men, for all employees.

When I say that we're not going to deny the obvious, I haven't been denying the obvious. I know we have a problem, and we're trying to fix it. The idea, though, that we can have allegations made and not yet established forming the basis of some big revamping of processes and systems is foreign to me. That doesn't make any sense. That's why I wanted to have that gender-based assessment. I need objective facts on which to formulate a response.

I have a vision for the organization. We're going forward. These things pop up. I need to understand them to fix them. That's the internal mechanism around some of these lawsuits and so on.

I know women in the organization who have been harassed. I've met with them. I've cried with them. It's terrible what has happened to some of them. We need to make that right, and we're trying to make it right.

Let's park that for a second and let's talk about Human Rights Watch. There again, I think, the idea that women are afraid to come forward, I need to understand that. I need to understand if that's true.

That's not my experience. It's not my experience that complainants are afraid to come forward out of fear of reprisals from the RCMP. That's foreign to me, so I need more information, and I need to get that. I think we really need to be careful around going too far out on a limb on some of those cases.

There are some terrible cases. There's a case in that Human Rights Watch report that is before the courts right now. An officer is alleged to have struck a young woman in the face during an arrest. We charged him. He's before the courts, criminally charged, right now. We didn't wait to do that.

We have to be careful, I think, as we go forward. I want to hear all the information. I want to understand this. I want to have colleagues and my partners understand it, and if something needs fixing, we're going to fix it.

The Chair: Thank you.

You have about 45 seconds now.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I guess I would say that when you're talking about target groups for recruiting, target groups you want to work with, in order to reach out to those groups and communicate effectively, somehow you're going to have to overcome this perception out there that there's a mistrust of the system. Whether or not it's real or a case-by-case thing you could prosecute, you still have that problem.

For instance, how are you going to reach out to aboriginal women and encourage them to join the RCMP while you still have this accusation and perception about the force?

Commr Bob Paulson: Okay. It's a fair question, Mr. Chair, but we are reaching out to aboriginal women. Aboriginal women are coming into the force.

Let me point to the four major investigative campaigns that are going on in western Canada right now to investigate violence and missing and murdered women. There is Project Devote in Manitoba. In Alberta, there is Project KARE; and in B.C., there are Projects E-PANA and Even-Handed. All have very sophisticated, elaborate, and developed outreach systems and programs to victim groups and community groups. That's why I think this Human Rights Watch report has to be carefully assessed as we go forward.

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

Mr. Hawn, we look to you now basically to conclude the questioning for today, which will take us to the end.

Mr. Hawn, please, five minutes.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the commissioner for being here again.

Commissioner, do you have enough resources to do your job?

• (1040)

Commr Bob Paulson: I could use a couple more commissioners.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Do you have enough financial resources to do your job?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

Would it concern you if the additional \$9.8 million we talked about for handling harassment complaints and so on were held up in some way? Would that concern you, if that money wasn't forthcoming?

Commr Bob Paulson: It would disappoint me, but we'd figure it out.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: But it would cause you some challenge?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: You don't have to answer this. I'll just point out that this legislation is not being held up by people on this side of the floor.

You've mentioned that you understand that you have a problem and you don't deny it. You've said you want to get on with it, which we certainly all applaud. Would it be easier to get on with it if people weren't in your face all the time publicly with allegations that aren't substantiated, which may or may not be true, but are merely allegations at this point?

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes, it would. But let me put a caveat on that.

I get that we are a police force. I get that we have to be careful about how we manage ourselves. But the most disconcerting, the most troubling, component of recent developments is the idea, as I've said, that people are afraid to come forward and make complaints. There's a lot of media attention on these issues, properly, when they come out. But it is very distracting. I'll give you that.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: This is a bit of a philosophical question.

The RCMP has a culture like any similar organization. Is it fair to say that this culture is a work in progress in meeting the expectations of society as it is today?

Commr Bob Paulson: It is.

That's a question I get quite often, and I'm fascinated by the idea of influencing the culture. I think the culture has to be one of a successful police organization that succeeds in the mission that Canadians put on us. That's the culture I want to see developed.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: With respect to the challenges you've had with harassment, there are other large organizations, one of which you were previously a member of. That has had similar challenges. It relies on discipline, authority, structure, and has stressful operations; that's obviously the Canadian Forces. They've had some challenges.

I'm not saying this on behalf of them at all, but would you be open, hypothetically, to some assistance with some folks who may have had some experience on that side with a similar situation?

Commr Bob Paulson: Absolutely. I'm open to anything.

I have a plan. I want to implement it. We have already reached out. The Canadian Forces is a great partner to the RCMP and we work together frequently and successfully. Both the previous Chief of the Defence Staff and this Chief of the Defence Staff have made a

point of offering their support for anything that we need from them, and I'm grateful.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Switching to the issue of female membership, right now the Canadian Forces has 12%; the RCMP has 18% and is aiming for 30% female membership, which is laudable and ambitious. You talked about trying to get to a 50% intake of women within the next two years, which is obviously pretty ambitious.

What's your forecast or expectation of attrition? Do you expect to see a higher level of attrition overall within the training organization?

Commr Bob Paulson: There are some very interesting data in the action plan tracking the demographic challenges that we face. We have just increased our intake for this year at Depot. The 50% intake was based on a certain level of troops, year in, year in, to get us to 30% by 2025. Obviously the more cadets we take in, the quicker that will go, but we are somewhat disadvantaged by recent history when the force took in a lot of people. The retention rate in the organization is 99%, so despite all the discussions we've had, people stick around.

If I might just end quickly, one of the challenges with females is they tend to leave earlier. At 25 years they tend to go out the door, and we have to fix that.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: You say there's 99% retention. That's obviously after they've been through Depot.

Commr Bob Paulson: Yes.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: What's your traditional attrition rate at Depot?

Commr Bob Paulson: I want to say 13%, but I could be corrected on that, so I'd say it's 13% to 20%.

• (1045)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: With this aggressive recruiting of women, which I think is great, do you expect that attrition rate to stay the same, go up, or go down?

Commr Bob Paulson: I would expect it to stay the same. We've tracked the reasons for some of that attrition, and a lot of it is because people did not understand what they were getting into.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hawn. Your time has basically elapsed.

Mr. Commissioner, we want to thank you for attending our committee today and for your response to this timely report. Thank you for your commitment to live up to and fulfill the recommendations in this report.

Certainly we wish you all the best. I think all Canadians want to see some of these new recommendations put into practice so that they can feel confident in and appreciate, as we do, the work that you and the RCMP do.

Thank you very much, committee.

The meeting is adjourned.

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