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Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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•(0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): Thank you, and please have a seat. We don't have a ton of time, so I'm very interested in getting this meeting started.

I want to thank Lieutenant-Colonel John Selkirk, retired, and Brigadier-General Pierre Boucher, retired, for joining us today to discuss the reserves.

Gentlemen, thank you for coming. You have 10 minutes for your opening comments, and then we'll ask our questions.

[Translation]

Brigadier-General (Retired) Pierre Boucher (President, Réserve 2000 Québec): Mr. Chair, ladies and gentlemen, I am Brigadier-General Pierre Boucher, and I am the president of Réserve 2000 Québec, which I am representing here today. I am here with my colleague, Lieutenant-Colonel John Selkirk, who represents Reserves 2000.

Réserve 2000 Québec's mission is to defend and promote the interests of the Canadian Armed Forces in general and, more specifically, the interests and values of the militia, also known as the army reserve, in Quebec, and its members. Réserve 2000 Québec is made up of retired members ranked up to honorary colonel.

Réserve 2000 Québec works with Reserves 2000, which operates in the rest of Canada. That organization is represented here today by my colleague, Lieutenant-Colonel John Selkirk. We both have a lot of experience with the reserves.

I have 28 years of service in the reserves, or the militia, plus 18 years as honorary colonel. I was the commanding officer of the Régiment de Maisonneuve, District No. 2 Quebec, and the Eastern Area (Militia). I was the chief of staff (reserve) at army headquarters, and honorary colonel of the Régiment de Maisonneuve, as I said, for 18 years. I was then chair of the Council of Honorary Colonels of Canada, and I am now president of the Quebec Branch of the Last Post Fund.

My colleague, Lieutenant-Colonel John Selkirk, also has extensive experience in the reserves. He began his service as a student in the militia, also known as the army reserve. He was then an infantry officer in the regular forces for 20 years. After leaving the regular forces, he joined The Brockville Rifles, a militia regiment, as deputy commanding officer and commanding officer for six years. Finally, he was lieutenant-colonel and honorary colonel of the same unit for nine years. He was also a member of the Council of

Honorary Colonels of Canada and has been executive director of Reserves 2000 since 1998.

I will let Colonel Selkirk talk about Reserves 2000 and Réserve 2000 Québec's shared perspective. Then I will pick up from there to conclude.

I will turn the floor over to Lieutenant-Colonel John Selkirk.

•(0850)

[English]

Lieutenant-Colonel (Retired) John Selkirk (Executive Director, Reserves 2000): Thank you very much, Pierre.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for this opportunity to address you and to take your questions about the army reserve, or the militia, as it's still known in many circles in Canada.

Reserves 2000 is a nationwide alliance of Canadians who are dedicated to preserving a vital and viable army reserve. Réserve 2000 Québec is Reserves 2000 in the province of Quebec. We may operate in two different languages, but we speak with the same tongue.

A defence review provides a rare opportunity to change Canada's defence establishment, and hopefully, for the better. The army reserve, the vital connection between Canadians and their army, will undoubtedly benefit from a fundamental examination of its purpose and current capabilities. In the past 50 years, defence white papers and the products of other defence reviews such as the Canada First defence strategy have said very little about the importance of Canada's reserve forces. Perhaps this was because wide public input was not sought or perhaps the views of reserve supporters were ignored. But today, in light of the post-Afghanistan deployment, the value of Canada's army reserve is recognized as never before. It is vital that a detailed discussion of its future be an integral part of this defence review process.

Part-time soldiers provided over 20% of the soldiers who were deployed to Afghanistan, and they now make up about a half of the total number of soldiers in the Canadian army. They are located in 117 Canadian communities, in 123 units across the country, and have proven their value many times over in recent years in a wide variety of operations at home and abroad. There's no reason the army reserve should not contribute more defence capability, but given the perilous situation reported this month by the Auditor General, it is painfully obvious that the time to re-evaluate assumptions governing the army reserve, which have been in force since the middle of the last century, is long past due.

Army reserve soldiers are cost-effective. All other benefits and attributes aside, the maintenance of part-time army reservists is more cost-effective than that of their full-time counterparts and the civilian employees of the Department of National Defence. The recent Auditor General's report shows that in fiscal year 2014-15 the Canadian army budgeted \$243 million of Canada's \$20-billion defence budget to pay and train 19,471 part-time soldiers. That's \$243 million out of a total budget of \$20 billion, which works out to 1.2% of the \$20-billion defence budget. A very small portion provides a half of the soldiers in the Canadian army. That works out to \$12,480 a soldier. At the same time, the last government stated in the last Canada First defence strategy that the all-in cost of adding one full-time soldier is \$150,000.

The Auditor General also reported serious flaws in DND accounting of army reserve costs. He pointed out that flaws in current DND accounting, overheads, the fact that 1,500 full-time army reservists are included in the army reserve budget, unsubstantiated charges for base support to reserve units, and other discrepancies such as monies that were spent on other programs other than the army reserve, yet that money was appropriated for the army reserve; all that obscures the cost of giving a good all-in cost for a part-time soldier. Consequently, his report didn't try to do that. Reserves 2000 has made the calculation that a reasonable all-in cost per year for one part-time soldier should be approximately \$25,000. There's the \$12,000 or so that I mentioned, which is the pay. The rest of it adds up to somewhere around \$25,000 per soldier. In other words, if a regular full-time employee costs \$150,000, you could have six part-time soldiers for the price of one full-time.

As some 50% of the current defence budget is consumed by full-time personnel costs, it seems quite clear that shifting more responsibility for defence capability to part-time reservists should be an attractive option for a financially pressed government.

• (0855)

Can the army reserve meet the challenge?

We are well aware of the tired old argument that part-time soldiers, except for an order in council, have no obligation to go to full-time service and therefore cannot be counted upon in an emergency. But over the past two decades, history shows us that army reservists have willingly, and with enthusiasm, turned out in all the numbers required to surpass any demands made on them by the army for missions both at home and abroad.

There's also the argument that a part-time soldier is not as well trained as a full-time soldier. This is particularly important for expeditionary missions. Those missions require a tremendous amount of team building and team integration before any unit can be deployed. Other than the few high-readiness units that the resource-strapped regular army is capable of maintaining on a day-to-day basis, all army units require intense pre-deployment workup. It's been an operationally proven fact that reservists in the ranks of the deployments for Bosnia and Afghanistan were equally as capable as their regular brethren by the time the unit left Canada on deployment.

In domestic operations, the skills of part-time soldiers are abundantly obvious. Reservists maintain high levels of expertise and basic military skills through their regular weekly, monthly, and

summer training schedules. They're able to react very quickly to disasters, often because they are already on the scene.

Canadian communities value their units. In addition to adding affordable depth to the Canadian defence establishment, reserve units provide their home communities with many more intangible advantages every day. The army reserve provides all the advantages of timely, available federal infrastructure and organized, well-trained local backup for first responders.

Countless mayors and reeves of Canadian municipalities are on record with ringing endorsements of their local units and are quick to raise substantial objections whenever the future of their unit is threatened. These municipal leaders are also quick to rally all the support at their disposal to drive home the advantages of having reserve units in their communities. These range from being a source of good part-time jobs to good youth employment, providing job-readiness training, leadership, and citizenship training, to being a significant economic driver, which spreads throughout the community. That comes from the payroll of the full-time staff, the part-time jobs, and the substantial purchase of goods and services.

The smaller the community, the more valuable its reserve unit because good part-time jobs are fewer and there's less redundant infrastructure than in larger communities. Taxpayers located outside major metropolitan areas feel they have the same rights to the advantages a reserve unit brings to their town as their urban cousins.

Unfortunately, the army reserve is at a breaking point. The current state of Canada's reserve army is perilous and uncertain. The Auditor General is the authority. He reported that strength has been shrinking by about 5% per year for the last five years. Although 21,000 reserve soldiers were budgeted for in fiscal year 2014-15, the actual number who were trained and attended regular parades was only 13,944.

Active strength is the holy grail of unit viability and many units, especially those in smaller communities, are now in danger of being unable to function due to the shortage of leaders and soldiers. This situation must be changed and bold steps must be taken to maintain this irreplaceable asset and cause it to thrive for all the tomorrows that we can envision.

At the same time, it must be recognized that the cause of shrinking units is not of their own making. The problem lies firmly at the feet of failed national policies that have produced inadequate recruit quotas, failed and highly flawed recruiting policies and procedures, and insufficient summer employment opportunities to give young soldiers who form the bulk of the units enough pay so they can continue to serve on a part-time basis while attending school.

Canadians have demonstrated great affection and support for their local army reserve units. To them, the loss or amalgamation of units would be of great concern and is, quite frankly, unacceptable.

● (0900)

We look to this committee to recommend that the army reserve be revitalized, expanded, nourished, and properly equipped to provide more cost-effective defence capabilities, while at the same time providing communities with the opportunity for individual Canadians to grow while serving their nation on a part-time basis. We ask you not to fail the army reserve.

This committee has great influence on the defence review. From Canada's earliest beginnings, the militia, the citizen soldier, has been the very backbone of our military establishment. Such soldiers are needed today more than ever before. It's time to step up and help these fine, young volunteers who are forever willing to put their lives on hold in the interest of their country. Please do the right thing, and help them remain at the ready.

That concludes my remarks, and I'm very happy to take any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony, gentlemen. I'm going to open the floor to....

Go ahead, but we're running a little bit late.

[*Translation*]

BGen Pierre Boucher: The reserve force has always been and must continue to be an important national institution that is well integrated in the community and helps to shape better Canadians.

It already has certain operational roles, such as Arctic response company groups, which effectively address current and future needs, and could assume additional roles if it had more personnel. Some of the new missions the reserve could contribute to include combatting threats such as cyber warfare, NBC defence and security operations to assist civilian authorities at a favourable cost/benefit ratio. Given the fragile and unpredictable international situation, one of the roles of the reserve force should also be to serve as a base for significantly augmenting personnel.

In order for the reserve force to be completely effective, the following improvements are needed. First, it needs a pool of reservists from which the reserve force can develop its own senior supervisory staff. In other words, it needs unit critical mass. Second, it needs a stable, adequate budget that is dedicated solely to its activities. It also needs a review and decentralization of the recruitment process because one of the biggest problems the army reserve has right now is the undue length of time it takes to recruit a soldier. It needs training that is adapted to the reality of reservists and offered to them based on their availability. It needs conditions of service that are conducive to member retention, such as guaranteed summer jobs for a minimum of six to eight weeks and operational duties. Lastly, it needs adequate equipment that is readily available for training.

Given the challenges it will have to address, the national priorities it will have to set, and its relative capacity to invest in defence, the Canadian government will have to give serious consideration to the reserve force when it reviews the national defence policy. If the suggested improvements are made, the reserve force will not only be able to offer relevant capacity, but will be able to do so at a lower cost.

That concludes our opening remarks.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much for your testimony and for being here today.

We'll open up with a seven-minute round of questions. I would ask you to be disciplined in your timing. I'll let you know, so if you're unsure, look at me. We went a little over in the opening remarks. I know everybody wants to ask questions.

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Rioux.

You have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome, gentlemen.

Mr. Boucher, you certainly convinced Pierre Paul-Hus and me in Trois-Rivières that the committee needed to hear from you. As you know, we don't have much time. Please know that we have a great deal of respect for you. Our Minister of Defence was a reservist.

I have just seven minutes. I will ask you questions that relate to what you told us in Trois-Rivières.

It is important for my colleagues here to understand your connection to the regular force. How has the relationship between the reserve and the regular force changed over time?

Let's talk about your problems with recruitment and membership. You gave me personnel numbers in Trois-Rivières. Analysts gave me some numbers, and I heard some numbers this morning. Can you tell us what they are and what they should be? I know that our goal is to have 28,500 reservists. Where are we on that?

You made it clear that there is a problem with equipment. You are considered second class. That is the message we got.

If there is any time left after you have answered those questions, I would like you to tell me about the connection to cadets.

● (0905)

BGen Pierre Boucher: First of all, it is important to talk about the evolution of the militia. During my years of service, I always referred to this unit as the militia. Now it is called the Army Reserve. We could debate that for quite some time, but it's a question of semantics.

Until 1970, the militia's role could be summed up as one of national survival. From 1970 to 1992, the militia took control of its own budget and training. It came a long way and achieved great things by 1992. That is how I see it, but this has been an issue of great debate. Because I commanded the Eastern Area during that time, I know that significant efforts were made to develop a strong militia.

At the time, the militia had quite a bit of flexibility in terms of our budgets, which we managed ourselves, as well as enrolment, which we managed effectively. Beginning in 1992, the regular force took over the militia and began managing our budgets. At that point, we returned to basic training, which was a bit of a disappointment for many reservists and militia members.

From 1992 to 1999, things continued to evolve, and around 1998-99, the Total Force concept was implemented. It remains in effect today. This concept does have some positive aspects. Basically, all militia members are supposed to be at the same level as the regular force members. The problem, however, is that regular members perform their duties full time, while militia members do so part time.

Most of our militia members or army reservists are students, and because they are students, they also have obligations in that regard, which have to be taken into account. In order for the reserves to be effective and to meet its needs, we have to think about the staff.

However, there has been a reduction in our personnel. At present, reserve recruitment is a major problem. We used to be able to recruit people pretty easily. We were able to use something called pre-enrolment. In other words, we could begin equipping and training individuals while their security checks were still being done. The appeal that young people felt for the reserves did not go away. Enrolling a young person today takes anywhere from six months to a year. Put yourself in the shoes of a student who is told:

[*English*]

“Don't call us. We'll call you.”

[*Translation*]

This wait time of six months to a year can cause people to change their minds. As a result, recruiting is hard.

Security standards must be met, yes, but it's also important to understand that, during training, a soldier does not have access to secret documents. That's why I think it would be okay to give these young people a job, while promoting a sense of belonging within Canada.

Some experts told us they had a problem with the National Defence Act. If those problems could be resolved in the past, I don't see why they can't be resolved now. I see the ambiguities that could be involved, but I think they could be dealt with very easily.

In the 1990s, the Canadian Forces had nearly 20,000 members, although now that number is only 13,944, based on the figures John provided.

Why has that number decreased? It is simply because of that problem.

The courses also need to be adapted to the reality facing our reservists. For instance, some of them are only available at certain times of the year. We therefore need to turn to them when it's possible for them.

Summer jobs are also a serious problem in the case of reservists. In the past, we were able to guarantee them a summer job for six to eight weeks, but now, we can only offer them three weeks. If students are promised only three weeks of employment during the summer, they're going to look elsewhere. They'll quit.

All of these factors contribute to the problem.

Autonomy, something we focused on quite a bit during the meeting in April, is important. Back in the day when the militia, or the army reserve, controlled its own budgets, those budgets could be allocated appropriately. I don't want to get into all the details, unless

you would like to. Now we have less control over our budgets. They are controlled by others, and we don't know for sure that 100% of the budget allocated to the militia by the House of Commons actually goes to the militia.

These are some of the serious problems we have seen. To sum up, recruitment, control of budgets—

• (0910)

[*English*]

The Chair: Excuse me, General, I'm going to have to cut you off to go on to the next question. We can circle back in a few minutes and finish that thought.

I'm going to give the floor over to Mr. Paul-Hus.

Sir, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I could sit down with our guests and answer some of these questions. I served with the reserves for 22 years, and I even commanded a unit.

I think what's important this morning, for the committee, for the people who haven't experienced it, is to understand the message. I want people to hear the message straight from your mouths, gentlemen, and not from mine.

In the 1990s, the reserve and regular forces were integrated, as a professional way to conduct operations, of course, to form what is known as the Total Force. I think the underlying objective of Total Force at the time was a good one. The aim was to bring together and train the forces differently. However, years of experience have shown us that, considering the cultural aspect, a reservist's work is different. Reservists can be professional in their military work, but how they enrol, work and come to work, considering their other obligations, as a student or whatever, is very different.

Can you confirm here this morning that, as part of the defence policy review, the government should completely review the Total Force concept and give command back to reservists directly, as was the case in the past?

BGen Pierre Boucher: John, do you want to respond to that?

[*English*]

LCol John Selkirk: If I may answer that question, yes. One of our major objectives has always been to return the command in control of the army reserves to reservists. I'm not speaking for the air force or the navy, but we feel that would be best for Canada if that happened.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Do you think the regular force members would react by saying that operational capability would suffer if single command were returned to the reservists?

[English]

LCol John Selkirk: Undoubtedly, there will be arguments made, and there's no doubt this close working arrangement the two components have had for the last number of years has increased the operational capability of reservists, and I'm sure you saw that in your time.

I don't think putting the reserve army back under a reserve chain of command would mean that that operational capability and that expertise would be lost.

I think the regular army has seen how valuable our soldiers are, and there would be no move not to try to employ as many of our soldiers as possible, which means that unlike 20 years ago, when that just didn't happen, this is happening now and I don't see it going away.

I think a lot of the benefits would remain, but the issues that have caused the fall in strength are issues of over-centralized policies coming from Ottawa that don't work in every part of this massive nation of ours. That's what we need.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Regarding recruitment, it is also important to understand the situation. When someone wants to join the regular force, it is usually about having a job or career, with a contract, for a minimum of three years or even 25 years. For some people who don't really know what they want to do, being a reservist is a good place to start. Meanwhile, other reservists might know what they want to do. For some people, it is a part-time job, but they are aware of the fact that they are part of an organization that could be called up, if needed.

Do you think that any changes need to be made to recruitment centres or to recruitment standards? Let me explain. Could a reservist enrol with a minimum of education, that is, enrol temporarily, on the condition that he take a course, and then enrol permanently once he passes the course? Maybe something like that could facilitate things? Right now, the enrolment process is the same as the one for a regular force member, and that means a six-month waiting period. That is unacceptable.

• (0915)

BGen Pierre Boucher: I completely agree. At this time, candidates fill out the same forms, whether they are applying for the reserve or regular force. That is not the problem. The problem has more to do with the medical exam and the security check. If we could solve that problem, we could easily enrol candidates.

Filling out forms can be done rather quickly. The person just has to come in and fill them out.

As for the medical exam, in my view, if a doctor believes that a candidate is fit for military service, that should be enough. However, the file has to be sent to Borden, in Ontario—I'm not sure if that is where they are still sent—and it takes three or four months for a decision to be made regarding whether that individual is fit for military service. The person making the decision never even sees the individual. That is one problem that could be solved.

Furthermore, as I mentioned, the security check takes a really long time. I've been told that, out of all the security checks that have been

done for the entire reserve force, no enrolment application has ever been rejected for that reason. Although, take that with a grain of salt; that is just what I've heard.

We are told that we have to make sure that young soldiers in training don't have access to certain documents, but they don't have access to any secret documents during their training.

As for weapons handling, I acknowledge that we teach that to soldiers when they first get into the reserves, but they can also get this kind of training from private companies, right here in Canada.

These arguments mean that the entire process is delayed between six and eight months. If we ask a young student to wait, he won't; he'll find something else.

Recruitment is a major problem.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: The major challenge, then, is not necessarily about having more money, but rather being able to use the money allocated to the reserves properly, by managing it directly.

As for recruitment, it is a question of simplifying the administrative procedures, which doesn't cost anything, in fact. That would solve 90% of the reserves' problems.

BGen Pierre Boucher: That's right.

It is important that the reserves be allowed to control the budget allocated by the House of Commons and decide how it is used.

[English]

The Chair: That's pretty much the time. Thanks very much.

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing today. I also want to thank you for your service to Canada, and I would include advocates in Reserves 2000 as providing service to Canada.

Locally, I have had the privilege of getting to know retired colonel Richard Talbot, who I am sure you know is the former commanding officer, and I guess, still the honorary colonel of the Canadian Scottish Regiment. What you are telling me today is not a surprise, because Richard has already been in my office, very forcefully bringing these issues to my attention.

I think you've done a very good job this morning in laying out the problems that reserves face, but also the contribution that reserves make. There is not enough public awareness of that contribution. Your testimony is very important on that point, both for the affordable depth question for the military, but also for the other impacts in the community.

I know that on Vancouver Island, especially in terms of opportunities for youth and part-time jobs, Colonel Talbot has been very big on pointing out what we've lost and used to have.

I am going to ask about recruiting. We just had some discussion, and I'd like to go back to that for a minute. You say that medical clearance and security clearance are the two obstacles. Is that because of a lack of resources within the military, or a lack of attention and priority given to the reserves?

I know that's a difficult one for you.

[*Translation*]

BGen Pierre Boucher: I will respond first, and then I'm going to ask my colleague to also respond to that question.

I am partly responsible. At the time of the transfer, I was Chief of Staff of the Army Reserve, and I agreed to the transfer of medical exams. I was promised, at a time when it was really hard to get doctors for the units, that approvals for medical exams would be accelerated. The transfer was done, then, but it has caused huge delays.

What's more, we could even use civilian doctors, through individual contracts, for enrolment purposes, which could help speed up the enrolment process.

The most important issue is still security. I am well aware that that is important, but with a little good will, that problem could be solved.

• (0920)

[*English*]

LCol John Selkirk: Mr. Garrison, I would say this: there is a lot of effort being put into improving the recruiting, especially on this terrible wait time—167 days—when a kid can go down and be hired by McDonald's within a week or so. We're just not able to compete.

On October 9, 2015, the chief of the defence staff signed an implementation directive which calls for an increase in the size of all reserves—that's all three services, plus the medical, plus, plus—by 1,500 positions, which hopefully will be 1,500 more soldiers, by July 2019. However, given the fact that the whole of the primary reserve is already about 5,000 under strength, if we add that 1,500 to it, how are we going to get from here to there without this massive change to policy, to attitude, to the culture of how we do business?

I can tell you that I have talked to as many people of ours across the country as I could in the last week or so, just to try and get a feel before coming here, and although he signed that directive in October, which is well over six months ago now, I asked what they are seeing at the unit level in terms of improvement. Nobody is reporting that there is any real improvement.

Whatever happens, I don't know how you make it happen, but there has to be a massive shake-up here.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much for your honesty on that point. I know it's a difficult thing to do to produce the change. We say it's not just money, but sometimes it is money.

In terms of providing summer opportunities, I'm actually a bit shocked that we're down to offering people three weeks. In many cases we're offering people three weeks of opportunity during the summer. That's much too little to actually recruit people and retain them in the reserves.

LCol John Selkirk: That is the problem. For the first year, the recruit is employed almost all summer just getting to the first stage of training. But it's after that.

Mr. Randall Garrison: It's a retention problem.

One of the things that Colonel Talbot raised with me is the important role of reserves in case of a natural disaster. His pitch to

me was that on Vancouver Island the reserves are now lacking the resources to be called out in terms of a disaster. In other words, it used to be that they could independently deploy to respond to a disaster, but now key resources are lacking for them to do that. Would you say that's the case across the country?

I see you are nodding.

[*Translation*]

BGen Pierre Boucher: As we have seen in the past, reservists are often deployed following natural disasters. There was the ice storm in 1998. Just a month before that, when I was chair of the Council of Honorary Colonels of Canada, during a discussion with the defence staff, I was told that we would barely be able to mobilize 10% of our personnel to help out in the event of a disaster, and yet, when the ice storm happened, 24 hours later, 50% of the reserves personnel were available and were deployed on the ground, even before the regular force members arrived.

It is important to understand that reserve units are scattered all across Canada. My current unit, the Régiment de Maisonneuve, is the only place where the Canadian flag flies in downtown Montreal. There are units scattered all over the countryside, and they often have armouries.

The ice storm crisis is the best example of the contribution made by reservists. Many reservists have also been called upon to help fight fires in western Canada. A well-prepared and well-trained soldier can respond very quickly to a number of requests.

• (0925)

[*English*]

The Chair: Perfect timing, seven minutes on the dot.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I think the testimony we're hearing today is crucial to the defence review, so I want to make sure we have some way to make sure this testimony is formally fed into that defence review with the backing of this committee. Therefore, at an appropriate time, I'm prepared to move a motion that we prepare a report based on the testimony we've heard today, a very short report, and that it be tabled in the House of Commons and also be given to the Minister of National Defence as part of the defence review.

The Chair: We'll take that under advisement and we'll deal with it during committee business at the end of the session.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much.

The Chair: I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Gerretsen.

You have the last seven-minute question.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here. I would agree with Mr. Garrison that what you're contributing today is extremely important to the discussion we're currently having. On Monday night we had a four-hour committee of the whole session with the minister, at which time we were able to ask him some questions about the reservists in particular. I can tell you that, given his experience, he's absolutely committed to making sure that reservists play an important role in the defence of Canada.

We've talked a lot about recruiting, and I want to continue to go down this road. Mr. Selkirk, when you came to see me in my office in Kingston, this was one of the things we talked about quite a bit. We talked about some of the reasons being medical or security, but tell us how this is different from what it was maybe 10 years ago. If the wait time is now six to 12 months, what was it 10 or 15 years ago?

LCol John Selkirk: I don't know, but certainly in the past, 20 or 15 years ago, reserve units were capable of doing the complete process within the unit.

In Kingston in the PWOR armoury, it could have been done right there. We hear anecdotal stories all the time from old, grey-haired guys like me about someone walking down to the armoury on Tuesday and coming back on Thursday to be sworn in. That actually was happening.

I'm not saying that should be possible in this day and age. I think there are probably some things that need to happen that would take a little bit longer, but I would say that it is not unreasonable, when you have reasonable people in those reserve units doing all those steps that need to be done, that it could be done within two or three weeks. I think that's perfectly possible.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Are you aware of any particular incident or, for lack of a better expression, any cumbersome bureaucracy that has led to the wait times being so much longer? Did something happen? Did a few incidents occur? Did the wrong people get through the door, so to speak?

LCol John Selkirk: They did not, to my knowledge, Mr. Gerretsen. I don't know of any instances, although undoubtedly a few bad things have happened, but you have to accept some risk when you're talking about an organization as large as this. You can do a lot of things to mitigate that risk. For example, if we can just get those kids in the door and start getting some money into their hands, they don't necessarily have to have a rifle in their hands for the first several weeks. There is adult leadership in the units. They're quite capable of making an assessment once the kid is there. If things look problematic, then we can release them very quickly.

However, I'm not aware of any incidents, and in my opinion, the problem started when the Canadian Forces recruiting group was formed and the whole thing was centralized. It's the centralization that really causes the problem.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: If I understand you correctly—I don't want to assume and so I'd rather hear you say it if it's the case—is the proper solution to improving the recruitment system to start to decentralize again and to put it more back into the hands of the individual units?

LCol John Selkirk: Absolutely, and concurrent with that, there has to be a recognition that a civilian doctor has passed numerous professional qualifications to get where he is, and he is just as capable of assessing that individual coming in the door as somebody reading a file on them in Camp Borden is. That's an attitude and a cultural thing that needs to change as well.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I know you both had an opportunity to speak to the effectiveness of our reservists. I would agree with the comment—and I'm not sure if it was Mr. Garrison who made it—that the general perception of reservists is that they don't contribute in the

same way that full-time members do. Can you give some examples other than at-home emergencies of where they may have been involved that the public might not know about?

• (0930)

[*Translation*]

BGen Pierre Boucher: I will answer that question and then hand things over to John.

Let's not forget that reservists are citizen soldiers. After staying with the same unit for three years, a reservist acquires skills they can carry with them for life. It is beneficial to Canada. We have to take a good look at the long-term impact the reservist will have.

What about the short-term impact? Take the mission in Afghanistan, for example. Some 15% to 20% of the forces in Afghanistan were reservists, as is the case in the majority of missions. At least that is the case in Quebec, but also elsewhere in Canada. I must say that I am more familiar with the numbers for reservists from Quebec. Reservists from Quebec did everything that was asked of the reserve force. Without reservists, the regular forces would not have been able to fulfill its mandate.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you. Before I run out of time, there is one more question I have.

We have talked a lot about young kids becoming reservists, and I know that at least in the PWOR in Kingston that's the case, but it's not always the case. Quite often we have police officers, firefighters, or other individuals in the community who work full-time jobs who also join the reserves. I'm wondering if you could talk a bit about the variety of individuals that exists.

LCol John Selkirk: Yes, we do have a wide variety, and they bring their civilian skills with them. They don't leave those at the door when they leave the house, and those skills can be very useful.

There are some problems in that area. For example, a qualified mechanic who has passed the provincial mechanics courses and is qualified in, say, the province of Ontario, is not qualified to work on an army truck. You have to go through a long, detailed, and probably a too wide and complicated training in order for you to be able to work on a vehicle. For years we have talked about transference of skills, both from the army to civvy street, which would be useful for veterans getting out, and back the other way. I'm not sure why all this...it doesn't seem to be rocket science, but it plays out that way.

There are also things.... You were giving examples of reservists who have done things that may not be recognized. I would suggest our own minister is a perfect example. His police skills were useful in Afghanistan.

The Chair: That sums up the last seven-minute question.

We're going to five-minute questions. We wish we had you here longer, and we may need to have you back, but please look to me for a cue on how much time you have left. Gentlemen, if you're unsure, I'll hold up a white piece of paper, which means you need to sum up, so I can get to the next questioner.

Mr. Rioux, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Luckily, there are two question periods.

Earlier you mentioned the ice storm. I was mayor at the time and I can tell you that your services were appreciated.

So far you have talked only about staffing and recruitment. I want to ask a two-part question and talk to you about budgets.

Over the past 10 years changes were made to the budgets and how they were administered. I want to go back to what you said when you spoke to us in Trois-Rivières about equipment. Could you talk to us about how this is no longer what attracts recruits to the reserves?

BGen Pierre Boucher: I must admit that things have improved when it comes to individual equipment. Twenty or 25 years ago, the equipment we had was outdated compared to what our militia, our reservists have now. It is more the training equipment that is lacking. The Bison or Grizzly armoured vehicles were purchased at the time. They were supposed to be for the militia. We were then told that if these vehicles were left with the militia units they might not get maintained properly and the decision was made to centralize them on the bases with the understanding that the militia could use these vehicles when it wanted. Unfortunately, when we wanted to use them, they were not available.

I believe that individual equipment, which includes clothing, does not cause serious problems. Equipment for collective training is the problem.

As far as budgets are concerned, when I was Commander of the Eastern Militia Area, I got a budget for pay and training, but the bases provided us with everything to do with transportation, and room and board, among other things. I had no control over any of that, but the bases were required to provide us all that. There weren't too many problems. Now, with the new system and limited budgets, each unit is responsible for all its expenses. We had to be given a budget to cover training, housing, food, and so forth. The money that was transferred to us was not the same as what we were getting before.

Class B reservists are those who can be employed full time. At one point we ended up with 10,000 class-B, full-time reservists. It goes without saying that this ate into a big part of the reserve force budget. LGen Leslie helped reduce that number. He determined that 10,000 reservists was too much and reduced the number to 4,000. The fact remains that even with 4,000 reservists, a good part of the reserve force budget is drained.

In sum, we would like to have better control of the budget that the House of Commons gives to the reservists.

John, do you have anything to add?

• (0935)

[*English*]

LCol John Selkirk: Certainly, I believe that if a reservist is employed for, say, more than three months on a continuous contract, as about 3,500 are across the Canadian Forces—that's army, navy, air force—when money is appropriated from Parliament, if you as a parliamentarian see a number that is a figure for the reserves, you

probably think it's part-time. You're not thinking full-time employees.

It has always been our argument that this distorts the whole potential to look at the reserves as a cost-effective organization. We've always advocated that for reservists who are on full-time duty over three months in time, that money should come out of the full-time pay budget, not out of the part-time pay budget.

The Chair: Thank you for the question and answer.

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Bezan. You will have the last word.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Lieutenant-Colonel Selkirk and Brigadier-General Boucher for being with us today. We appreciate the hard work you're doing advocating on behalf of our reserve force.

I agree with everything you're saying about recruitment. That is the area we have to put more emphasis on, and we need to streamline the process to empower the local units to actually get out there and recruit their own people.

I want to come down to three quick things that I think are all linked together from an employability standpoint.

You mentioned making sure there's summer employment, especially for young reservists, and sometimes training our cadets. What other opportunities would you pursue there?

The Auditor General in his report also mentioned that DND had pretty much raided the budget that was set aside for reserves. Then, of course, we have this problem with lack of equipment and lack of training opportunities.

There is a third thing that you could, if possible, tie in as well. My understanding is that our reserve force doesn't have contracts like we have in the regular force or like the reserves in the United States have. They have contracts that they are obliged to uphold. I was wondering if that is something we should be talking about as well.

LCol John Selkirk: I'll take that last part.

No, we don't have contracts. I don't know how efficient that would be. If an individual on joining the army reserve were told the expectation that we have for the next 12 months and what we as an organization commit to, but we want the individual to commit to being there when we're going to do these things, I think a deal, if you wish, like that would be helpful. I don't honestly know. Once you get into a contract, the next thing you know, you're going to have lawyers and goodness knows what.

We need an atmosphere of when we bring these young Canadians in, we have to provide them with something, but they have an obligation to provide something back. I'd rather see that sort of an arrangement, personally.

I've already forgotten your first two questions.

• (0940)

Mr. James Bezan: One was the type of summer employment opportunities we should be really focusing on.

[*Translation*]

BGen Pierre Boucher: Summer jobs for reservists is very important. If we offer a three-week course to a reservist and he doesn't have a job to come back to, he will probably not take the course. We have to offer him a job for the whole summer. You might say it is a matter of budget, and I completely agree. It is about setting the priorities that will dictate our direction.

Among other things, to keep our young people in the reserve force, we must give them the opportunity to meet challenges. In the past, we had operational tasks. The young soldier who does basic training will not ask for more during the first summer. However, if during the second summer we ask him to do his basic training over again, he will grow weary of it. We could offer to have him do operational tasks. That program was suspended for a time, but we have started to assign operational tasks again.

It is important to be able to offer summer employment, as least for as long as the person is a student.

There is also the issue of the qualification of reservists. The reserve force suffered tremendously from Canada's mission in Afghanistan for the simple reason that all the resources were being used to support the effort in that country, which we were all in favour of. However, in the meantime, the courses were not being offered, not the qualification courses or the courses for non-commissioned officers and for officers. We are currently paying the price for that, in that we are lacking leadership within the different units. We have to take into account the reality of the militia member.

Also, courses are offered and given to the entire force. For example, it is decided that a course will be offered to members of the regular force on a certain date in April, and reservists are invited to attend. The member of the regular force will be available, while the militia member will have to make arrangements with his employer. If the course is cancelled after two weeks' notice, the militia member is left high and dry. He will not be working for two weeks and his employer might not be happy that he took two weeks' vacation in order to take a course that ended up not going through.

The system has to be directed to the militia and based on what suits the militia and not based on the system in place for the regular force.

[*English*]

The Chair: That's the amount of time we have for today. We're going to change panels. I want to thank you both very much for coming. I wish we had more time. Thank you for your care and attention to this very important matter, and thank you for your service.

I'll suspend for two minutes so we can switch our panels.

- (0940) _____ (Pause) _____
- (0945)

The Chair: Welcome back. We don't have a ton of time. I wish we had more.

Mr. Gerretsen, you had a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, I think it's prudent for this committee to recognize the fact that it's Mr. Bezan's birthday today, and happy birthday to him on behalf of the committee.

Thank you very much for that opportunity, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I wish we had time to sing happy birthday; however, we'll have to do that after the fact.

Welcome back. I'd like to welcome the Communications Security Establishment folks, Shelly Bruce, Greta Bossenmaier, and Dominic Rochon. Thank you very much for coming. We're on a bit of a compressed timeline, so I will give you 10 minutes for the opening statement.

During the period for questions and answers, if you see me hold up this white piece of paper, I'm not surrendering. I just need you to wrap up so I can keep the questions and answers flowing so everyone gets an opportunity.

Thank you for appearing today. You have the floor.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier (Chief, Communications Security Establishment): Thank you so much.

[*Translation*]

Good morning Mr. Chair and committee members.

My name is Greta Bossenmaier and I am the Chief of the Communications Security Establishment, known as CSE. I am accompanied by Mr. Dominic Rochon, who is the Deputy Chief, Policy and Communications, and Ms. Shelly Bruce, who is the Deputy Chief, Signals Intelligence. It is our pleasure to appear before you today to talk about the mandate, role and ongoing activities of CSE.

This year marks CSE's 70th anniversary. In the past 70 years, the Communications Security Establishment has adapted to enormous changes in the international security environment and in the rapidly evolving nature of communications technology. From the Cold War and telegraph to terrorist groups like ISIS, and the Internet, the nature of our work is more complex and more diverse than ever.

Allow me to start by providing some background. Just over five years ago, CSE's place in government was changed to that of a stand-alone agency within the National Defence portfolio, reporting to the Minister of National Defence. Today, CSE is one of Canada's key security and intelligence organizations.

Our mission is derived from our three-part mandate under the National Defence Act.

The first part of our mandate is the collection and analysis of foreign signals intelligence. The National Defence Act authorizes CSE to acquire and use information from the global information infrastructure to provide foreign signals intelligence based on the Government's intelligence priorities. This intelligence helps provide a comprehensive view and unique insight into the potential threats Canada faces. It's important to emphasize that CSE only targets foreign entities and communications, and is prohibited by law from targeting Canadians or anyone in Canada.

• (0950)

[English]

The second part of our mandate is cyber defence and protection. CSE provides advice, guidance, and services to help ensure the protection of electronic information and information infrastructures of importance to the Government of Canada. Our sophisticated cyber and technical expertise helps identify, prepare for, and respond to the most severe cyber threats and attacks against computer networks and systems, and the information they contain.

Finally, the third part of our mandate is to provide technical and operational assistance to federal law enforcement and security agencies in the performance of their lawful duties. As Canada's national cryptologic agency, CSE possesses unique capabilities and expertise. Under the assistance mandate, those capabilities may be used to assist a requesting law enforcement or security agency under their legal authority.

It's also very important to highlight that the principles of lawfulness and privacy are critical to our work. We have a responsibility to protect privacy, and we take that responsibility very seriously. Protecting Canadians' privacy is a fundamental part of our organizational culture and is embedded in our organizational structures, policies, and processes. CSE has a strong privacy framework as well as internal review and independent external review.

The external review of the Communications Security Establishment is performed by the independent CSE commissioner. The commissioner, a retired or supernumerary judge, and his expert staff have full access to CSE's employees, our records, our systems, and our data. He has the power to subpoena, if necessary. These measures contribute to ensuring that CSE's activities are conducted in a way that protects Canadians' privacy interests.

As I mentioned earlier, throughout its 70-year history, CSE has proudly served our country while adapting to enormous changes in the international security environment. As you might imagine, this dynamic environment will continue to shape our current and ongoing activities.

In terms of results, our intelligence has played a vital role in supporting Canada's military operations. It has helped uncover foreign-based extremists' efforts to attract, radicalize, and train individuals to carry out attacks in Canada and around the world. It has provided early warning to thwart foreign cyber-threats to the Government of Canada and critical infrastructure and networks. It has identified and helped to defend the country against espionage by hostile foreign intelligence agencies. It has furthered Canada's national interests in the world by providing context about global events and crises and informing Canada's government decision-making in the fields of national security, defence, and international affairs.

As part of our ongoing efforts, we will continue to ensure that we provide timely and valuable foreign intelligence to meet the priorities of the Government of Canada. In an increasingly complex international environment, the need for foreign intelligence is as critical as ever.

Specifically, CSE support for Operation Impact provides vital information and helps protect Canadian troops from threats on the ground in Iraq. The Minister of National Defence has identified intelligence as an important aspect of this mission, and I'm proud that CSE will continue this contribution as Canada's mission evolves.

We will also continue to place an emphasis on cybersecurity. More and more of the world's and Canada's government operations, our business, our military systems, and citizens' lives are conducted online. This increased prevalence of digital information and electronic systems represents tremendous opportunity for Canada, but it also presents risks and threats to our government systems, to Canadian industry, and ultimately to Canadians.

While protecting Canada's most sensitive communications and information has always been core to CSE's mandate throughout our 70-year history, increased reliance on digital information has necessitated a heightened focus for us on cybersecurity. This is a realm in which the Communications Security Establishment has proven itself to be an innovative leader and trusted partner, leading the CSE to be a centre of excellence in cybersecurity for the Government of Canada.

The number of nation-states and non-state actors that possess the ability to conduct persistent malicious cyber-operations is growing, and Canada is an attractive target. CSE's cyber-defence activities play a critical role in the whole-of-government effort in combatting cyber-threats.

For example, CSE's sophisticated cyber-defence mechanisms block over 100 million malicious cyber-actions against the Government of Canada every day. In addition, CSE's cyber-defence information sharing has helped prevent significant losses to the economy and to Canada's most sensitive information, which has helped Canadian businesses protect their systems and information.

Through CSE's educational initiatives, such as our "Top 10 IT Security Actions", which I provided you a copy of today, we're helping to protect Government of Canada networks and information. We help ensure that government IT professionals are informed about the latest threats and mitigation measures to protect Government of Canada systems and the information they contain.

• (0955)

[Translation]

Finally, we are committed to becoming more open and transparent about how we protect Canadians' security and their privacy.

In January, CSE held its first ever technical briefing for media and for parliamentarians. Explaining complex technical aspects of our work in unclassified settings is challenging, and this media briefing was a positive first step.

We are taking other steps to tell Canadians more about the work that we do to help protect them, from recently entering the social media world by launching a Twitter account, to posting new content to our website, to producing videos about our cyber defence work.

I'll conclude my remarks by stating that I am confident in our ability to remain resilient in the midst of significant change, to address the growing demands posed by cyber threats, to provide timely and vital foreign intelligence to the Government of Canada, and to continue to safeguard the privacy of Canadians.

My confidence stems from the professionalism and commitment of CSE's highly skilled workforce. CSE's employees play a fundamental role in shaping our organization and our capabilities, and in delivering on our objectives. They are our most important asset.

Thank you for inviting us here today. It would be our pleasure to answer any questions you might have.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much for your testimony.

I'm going to move along quite quickly here and open the floor up to Mr. Fisher.

You have the floor for seven minutes.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much, folks, for being here. What's your Twitter handle? I'm going to follow you.

Mr. Dominic Rochon (Deputy Chief, Policy and Communications, Communications Security Establishment): Yes. It's CSE_CST.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. Do we all have that?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: It's as catchy as it gets.

Mr. Dominic Rochon: That's the English one. The French one is the opposite, CST_CSE.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Of course, I'm interested in the balance of protection, the privacy of Canadians versus how we make sure that we protect Canadians by getting the intelligence that we actually need. That's your job, right?

When you discovered that you did share that metadata containing the identities of Canadians, what did you do right away? What were the things that you did to correct that right away? I'm thinking, obviously you'll see there are lessons learned here, but what types of things did you do immediately when you discovered that had happened?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you very much for the question.

Mr. Chair, I think it's really important, as the member pointed out, that when this issue occurred, CSE actually found the issue, and we proactively informed the Minister of National Defence and the commissioner who reviews the Communications Security Establishment. We found the issue. We proactively informed our authorities. We also proactively suspended the sharing of the metadata in question. We also did a review in terms of the incident overall. We looked at and determined that there was a whole suite of additional

privacy measures in place; hence, we assessed that the privacy impact was low.

We also took note that the commissioner did a review of the issue as well. He noted that he believed that the error was actually unintentional. He also noted the CSE's full co-operation with his review. Basically, we found it, identified it, informed those responsible, and we undertook a review. We continue now to update our systems and our processes to ensure that we have robust processes in place and that we are able to share the important intelligence.

• (1000)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Have we resumed that sharing process of the metadata again with our allies?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: We have not yet resumed the sharing. We want to ensure, as I mentioned, Mr. Chair, that a solid process is in place and procedures are in place before we start sharing again. That's something the minister will make the final decision on.

Mr. Darren Fisher: In your opinion, do you think that any changes are needed to Canadian laws or legislation as a result of the commissioner's recommendations?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: It's most prudent for me to leave legislative changes in the purview of government and Parliament. I will note that over the last number of years, commissioners and previous commissioners have made a number of recommendations with regard to CSE's activities. Over 90% of those recommendations have now been implemented. Some of those recommendations did touch on potential legislative changes.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, in light of the fact that time is tight, I'd be pleased to give any remaining time to the member for Surrey Centre, if he has a question he'd like to ask.

The Chair: Very good. You have the floor.

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): I want to thank you for taking valuable time out from protecting our country on the cybersecurity side to come here.

As guardians of Canada's cybersecurity and cybercrime, you prevent intelligence breaches and control the firewalls. Do you think Canada has adequate security measures as of now for the cyber-threats that we face globally?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

Mr. Chair, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, the whole realm now of cybersecurity is a very dynamic environment, because the threats are changing, the nature of technology is changing, and threat actors are changing. It's a very dynamic environment and from the CSE's perspective of working with our partners across government, we are putting a lot of focus on that.

Over the last number of years, protecting and enhancing the protection of the Government of Canada's systems has really been a core focus for our organization. I would say that we've made a lot of progress over the last number of years in terms of upping the defences around the Government of Canada's systems and also helping to protect critical infrastructure in Canada.

At the same time, I would be remiss if I didn't say that this is a constantly evolving challenge. We can never rest on our laurels saying we've done a good job, as it's just too dynamic an environment. One of our key challenges going forward and working with our partners across government will be to continue to remain diligent and try to continue to stay ahead of the threats and ahead of the demands.

While we've made, I believe, significant progress, I would never want to leave the committee with the impression that we're done and there's not more to do. This will be an environment in which we will have to continue to remain ever vigilant and continue to up our game.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Thank you.

What percentage of the government's IT budget is used to defend against cybercrime? Would you know that in terms of each department? Do you monitor that?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: We monitor systems, that's for sure. We don't monitor in terms of the actual expenditure across the Government of Canada.

Mr. Chair, I'd have to say that perhaps one of the central agencies would be better able to answer that question in terms of the total amount that government spends on information technology and information technology security.

Mr. Randeep Sarai: A little along the same lines, many countries now are budgeting separately or have a separate line item for cybersecurity versus just IT. Do you recommend that Canada also have that same separate line so we can monitor in each department how much we are spending for cybersecurity rather than just having it clumped in with IT and have it a very small percentage?

My understanding is that a lot of agencies or foreign or organized crime are trying to penetrate our systems, whether it be minutely to gather someone's personal intel to blackmail them or whether it's to get corporate espionage. Do you think it would be recommended to have it as a separate line item so that we could also see and budgets don't get all clumped into IT?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: To your point that the environment is so dynamic and the nature of the threat actors, we're seeing everything from cybercriminals to the so-called hacktivists, to state actors and non-state actors, all playing a very active role in this cyber-threat realm.

In terms of creating a separate line item or showing the amount of expenditure, maybe on that I would just note that the government has committed to undertake a cybersecurity review that is led by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness in collaboration with a number of other ministers, including the Minister of National Defence. Perhaps that's a question that will be raised in the midst of that review.

• (1005)

Mr. Randeep Sarai: Am I out of time?

The Chair: You're out of time.

I am going to give the floor over to Ms. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and through you, how is Canada sharing

threat intelligence and with whom is it sharing? How does it do the sharing of threat intelligence?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

In terms of sharing threat intelligence, I'll go back to our three-part mandate. First, it's a mandate in terms of foreign signals intelligence and also a mandate in terms of cyber-protection. We share threat information from both of those domains.

I'll start on the cyber-protection mandate. I'm going to turn to my colleague, Madam Bruce, to talk a little on the foreign intelligence side.

In terms of cyber-protection, we share threat information with two key parties, if I can put it that way. First, we share within the Government of Canada family. It's often said that cybersecurity is a team imperative, that in order to be truly protected, all the pieces of the Government of Canada need to work together.

One of the key roles for CSE is to share the cyber-threat information that we're seeing and detecting with other Government of Canada partners. Some of those partners include Shared Services Canada, which plays a very important role in terms of providing IT infrastructure for the Government of Canada. We also share threat information with individual departments that may be coming under attack or facing particular threats. Such is that first bucket of whom we share with in terms of cyber-threats. We also share cyber-threat information via our partners in the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. They run a cyber centre, which has an important role of providing both threat information and mitigation advice to critical infrastructure components in the private sector. So there are two big families in which we share our cyber-threat information.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

Very quickly, does threat intelligence sharing occur with IT security firms in the private sector?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Via our partners in Public Safety in terms of critical infrastructure providers, one of their roles is to share cyber-threat information with critical infrastructure providers.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The USA Freedom Act has revised the USA Patriot Act, which was passed shortly after 9/11 and it required certain phone companies to give the NSA bulk records, metadata, and the number, dates, times, and duration of phone calls, but not the identity of callers or the contents of the conversations.

Would a similar amendment to Bill C-51, removing your ability to collect metadata, impact your ability to carry out your mandate?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chair, I'll try to answer that in a couple of perspectives. I'm not an expert on the USA Freedom Act, so I won't spend too much time on that.

In terms of our sharing of metadata, I'll just talk a bit about our answer about what we've gone through there in terms of identifying the issues. We will not resume that sharing of metadata until both I and the minister are confident that the processes are in place.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry, but that wasn't the question.

If you were not allowed to collect the metadata, would that impact or impede your ability to fulfill your mandate?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

Yes, I can tell you that metadata is critical to CSE's operations from three perspectives, and I'll try to be brief.

As you know, metadata is not the content of the communications; it's the context around the communications. It's routing information, how telecommunications are routed through the global information infrastructure.

There are three critical roles that metadata plays for CSE and for the Government of Canada. First, it helps us to better understand the global information infrastructure, that vast intranet of information, and how it works. Second, it helps us to identify foreign threat actors—who they are and whom we'll target our defence activities against. Third, it helps us from a cyber-defence perspective. It helps us to identify malicious cyber-actors and to protect Government of Canada systems.

So the short answer is yes, metadata is critical to our operations.

•(1010)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Does the U.S. share its information from Prism with Canada, with CSE?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: I don't have that information off the top of my head.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: That's not a problem.

Individuals in the private sector knew about the Heartbleed bug months before anyone publicly reported the vulnerability. Recognizing that the CSE does not monitor Canadian individuals, when was it that the CSE first learned about the Heartbleed bug?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: I believe that the Heartbleed virus incident happened before my time at CSE. It was back in 2014, I believe. I would have to get back to the committee on the actual date.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: To what extent does the CSE monitor the dark web?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Our cyber-activities and cyber-defence activities are critically important to the Government of Canada. Mr. Chair, I'm sure the committee can appreciate that it wouldn't be appropriate for me to get into our capabilities, methods, and techniques here.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Does the CSE track or monitor threats emanating from the dark net?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chair, as I said, we take our cybersecurity responsibilities very seriously, and we use a variety of techniques and tools, but from a national security perspective, it would be inappropriate for me to talk about our methods, capabilities, and techniques.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: From the standpoint of the CSE, we're in the policy development stage of cybersecurity from a defence standpoint. Would it help the CSE to fulfill its mandate were Canada to adopt more than just a defensive posture on cybersecurity? What if we were to adopt an offensive posture? Would that be of assistance to the CSE?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: CSE is here to assist the Government of Canada both in terms of foreign signals intelligence and cyber-defence. There are two reviews. One is the defence review ongoing now, led by the Minister of National Defence. The other is the cyber-review, which the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Management will lead. It's an interesting question that perhaps those reviews will consider.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask our witness to provide us with the date that the CSE first detected the Heartbleed virus or knew about it.

The Chair: Can we get that reported to us after the committee meeting? If you could take that under advisement, we'd appreciate it.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: I'll take that down in my notes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Garrison, you have the floor.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my thanks to our witnesses for being here today.

I think we all recognize the important work that CSE does in protecting national security, but the very nature of your work also brings into question the other part of the dual responsibility of governance, and that is protecting civil liberties and privacy.

The question of metadata raises serious concerns for many Canadians, especially given the 2012 project that CSE seemed to have been running in partnership with the U.S. National Security Agency, which had to do with monitoring airport Wi-Fis and people's movements. The commissioner, as the review authority, recommended that CSE request a new ministerial directive on the use of metadata. He said that your mandate and your instructions were unclear.

Have you requested or received a new ministerial directive on metadata?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

The incident, actually, that the member referenced was covered in, I want to say, last year's report by our commissioner. He looked into this incident, and he determined that CSE, number one, had the authority to conduct the activity, the study, and also did so in a lawful manner. I thought that would be important to put on the record.

In terms of addressing the commissioner's recommendations, I noted he's made over a hundred recommendations. Dom will correct me in terms of the actual number, and we have implemented over 90% of those recommendations. The recommendations that the member has cited were recommendations that he made in his most recent report, and we are still in the throes of actioning those.

•(1015)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Given the problem that came up with information-sharing of metadata with the Five Eyes, and I know you were asked previously by Mr. Fisher whether that sharing is taking place, I just want to reconfirm that while we're still collecting and still analyzing that metadata, without a new ministerial directive we're not sharing that with any of our partners at this point.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chair, thank you for the question.

As I did note before, we have not resumed the sharing of that type of metadata with our allies, but we do continue to collect it and to analyze it.

Mr. Randall Garrison: There was a remark by Ms. Gallant earlier that of course CSE doesn't monitor Canadians, and I think we all understand that on your own legal authority, your mandate doesn't include monitoring Canadians here or abroad.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Correct.

Mr. Randall Garrison: But under the third piece of your mandate, you provide assistance to Canadian law enforcement authorities. Isn't it true that in fact CSE does monitor Canadians under the legal authority of other agencies?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question, Mr. Chair.

I think it's very important to reflect on the various parts of our mandate. I have actually given out a little summary sheet about the three-part mandate. In terms of our foreign signals intelligence and information protection mandates, the part A and part B, it's in our legislation, and we do not direct our activities at Canadians—anywhere or anyone in Canada.

We do have a part C mandate which is an assistance mandate. Under that mandate we can provide technical and operational assistance to federal law enforcement and security agencies in the performance of their lawful duties and under their authority. It's under their authority that these activities take place.

Mr. Randall Garrison: To be clear, then, your agency is involved in doing this.

My question would be, do you take for granted when those requests come that they're lawful, on behalf of the other agencies, or is there an independent review of those requests in your agency as to their lawfulness before those activities are undertaken?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: When we receive a request, it is a request. We review that request to ensure that the lawful authority is there.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Do you report these activities that you undertake on behalf of other agencies as part of your annual reporting or your reporting to the commissioner, or do you depend on those agencies to report those activities to their monitoring bodies?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

In terms of the commissioner of the Communications Security Establishment, I already noted earlier that he has the authority to review all of CSE's activities, and again, that includes our information, our people, our systems, etc. His review and his authority to review cover all three parts of the CSE mandate.

Mr. Randall Garrison: There is no proactive monitoring of Canadians for other agencies to any body.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Proactive review; we do produce a classified annual report to the minister. I produce that to the minister, so I do report to the minister on an overview of all of CSE's activities, and again, the commissioner also produces a public report that touches all of CSE's activities.

Mr. Randall Garrison: But do those reports contain at least a summary of your activities undertaken on behalf of other agencies which monitor Canadians?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Dom, do you want to provide an overview in terms of what the reports include?

Mr. Dominic Rochon: The annual report to the minister, the classified annual report, absolutely does. It covers those activities.

I'll just clarify again that actually under me, we have a responsibility, whenever there is a request that comes from a security agency such as the RCMP or CSIS, to verify that they do have lawful authority, meaning they have to have a warrant or whatever it is. Then when we engage, we're operating under their lawful authority, so we're acting as their agent. We're acting as though we were a CSIS or RCMP employee, and absolutely, those are reviewed by the commissioner. The commissioner reviews those activities making sure that we actually verified that.

We have Department of Justice staff on the premises to help us, if there's any question as to whether or not the lawful authority is indeed in place. So, yes, we report annually to the minister in a classified report and those contain statistics, yes.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks.

The Chair: You have about 30 seconds for a question and an answer.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much for those answers.

The Chair: Mr. Spengemann, you have the floor.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have two brief questions, and I'd be happy to defer the remainder of my time to the next Liberal speaker.

If I could refer to page 2 of your testimony, the second paragraph, "It's important to emphasize that CSE only targets foreign entities and communications, and is prohibited by law from targeting Canadians or anyone in Canada".

Bracketing the "in Canada" portion, how seamless are operations in the case of Canadians with dual nationalities? If someone is Canadian and holds a second nationality and is outside the country, are you still prohibited by law from gathering information with respect to that person? If you're not, is somebody else able to?

•(1020)

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you very much for the question.

Mr. Chair, I might ask my colleague to provide some further detail on that.

Madam Bruce.

Ms. Shelly Bruce (Deputy Chief, Signals Intelligence, Communications Security Establishment): Thank you.

Mr. Chair, we do not distinguish between dual nationality and Canadian citizenship. We use the definition under the Immigration Act of what constitutes a Canadian.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: If you don't have authority, is there another entity in the security establishment that would have authority? I'm thinking of our police forces.

Ms. Shelly Bruce: Absolutely.

We work very closely with the security and intelligence community within Canada. Everybody has their own remit and their own mandate and they operate within those constraints. The RCMP and CSIS would be the two that are more likely.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: It's fair to say that operationally it really is quite seamless. Even though your jurisdiction stops, the other jurisdiction kicks in right at that spot where yours stops.

The second question goes back to testimony that this committee received early on in the review of the aerial readiness of North America. Can you comment on and ideally substantiate the testimony that this committee received that domestic terrorism, defined as terrorism that would occur within Canada, is our principal security threat?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Mr. Chair, I'm not *au courant* of the previous testimony that occurred here.

I will note that in terms of overall threats to Canada, I reflect on the remarks that were made not too long ago by the outgoing national security adviser who talked about two primary threats that he was most concerned about. He had a responsibility of looking at the overall threat environment for Canada. The two that he referred to that were utmost in his mind were counterterrorism and cyber-threats.

In terms of overall threat reporting, the national security adviser and CSIS both have an authority to look at the overall threat environment.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: That's helpful.

Mr. Chair, those are my questions. I'd be happy to defer the remaining time to the next Liberal speaker.

The Chair: The parliamentary secretary asked if he could have a question. I'd like some latitude to give him an opportunity to speak.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Mr. McKay, you have the floor.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): One of our NATO partners, Estonia, had a cyber-attack from what's presumed to be Russia. It was pretty serious. What are the implications for NATO, and therefore indirectly for us, and what were the lessons learned from that cyber-attack?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

Many of the questions today go back to the heart of what I think we're seeing, a watershed change in the nature of the cyber environment, the types of attacks that are occurring. To the point the member made, there are a wide variety of attacks.

You're referencing attacks at a state level. We're seeing attacks on critical infrastructure in various countries, attacks against the Government of Canada systems from a variety of threat actors. From each one of these either successful or unsuccessful attacks, we all learn something. The international community learns something. One of the things we learn over and over again goes back to my earlier point that we can't be complacent, that we always have to continue to look at our methods, our tools, our techniques, the types of threat actors.

It's impossible to be complacent. You always have to try to stay ahead of this.

The other item I raised before is it has to be a team imperative. No one organization or one country can do everything alone. It very much is trying to work together and bring together the various resources to deal with these complicated cyber-attacks.

Looking forward, we'll have to continue to be very vigilant. The advice that we provide to the Government of Canada, I've given you our "Top 10 IT Security Actions", those have evolved. We continue to learn from various actions that are taken. We also learn from when people have implemented some of our recommendations. Once those are taken care of, what are the next variety of steps we recommend that people take?

It's constantly evolving, necessary to be a team imperative, and impossible to say we're done; I don't think we're ever going to be done in this domain.

• (1025)

The Chair: Thank you very much for the answer.

We'll move on to our second round of questions for five minutes, starting with Mr. Rioux.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Bossenmaier, thank you for being here. You are becoming a familiar face at this committee.

If I am not mistaken, your \$583 million envelope comes from the Department of National Defence. You are in charge of providing intelligence to all the other departments. This intelligence is useful not just to defence or foreign affairs, for example. What is the connection or what are the ramifications with the other departments?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

I am more comfortable speaking English. I will answer your question in English.

[English]

As a point of clarification, our budget doesn't actually come from the Department of National Defence. It's appropriated to the Communications Security Establishment. As I mentioned, it was about five years ago that the Communications Security Establishment became a stand-alone agency, still under the National Defence portfolio and clearly reporting to the Minister of National Defence, but we're now a separate organization. Again, that happened about five years ago.

In terms of the funds we have and the efforts we make, the member is absolutely correct. I can talk both on the foreign signals intelligence side and on the information protection side. We work very closely with our colleagues in the Department of National Defence. We have a long-standing relationship that goes back throughout our 70-year history of working with the Canadian Armed Forces and supporting them in their operations. That continues today with our efforts with them, for example, in Operation Impact in Iraq.

At the same time, we do provide foreign signals intelligence to decision-makers across the Government of Canada, not only in terms of the Minister of National Defence and colleagues at the Department of National Defence, but through other decision-makers across the Government of Canada in line with the intelligence priorities that the government sets.

The member is also absolutely correct in terms of our cyber-defence activities. We work very closely, of course, with the Department of National Defence to help ensure that their systems are secure. At the same time, we work with the whole-of-government partners, again whether it be Shared Services Canada, or Public Safety emergency management, or the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, and individual departments, all of which are part of this overall effort to secure the Government of Canada systems.

Yes, our efforts across all three of our mandates are there to support Government of Canada priorities. We work not only with our colleagues in the Department of National Defence, and of course in the Canadian Armed Forces—we're very proud to work alongside them—but across the other government departments as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Earlier, the parliamentary secretary was talking about cyber threats. This is an area he is quite familiar with. It is new to me. For my own knowledge and for those watching us this morning, can you provide some very simple examples of cyber threats?

[English]

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

In terms of specific examples of cyber-threats, I'll try to answer that in two parts. I'll talk briefly about the cyber-threat actors, because it's an important piece, and also about some of the cyber-threats we are seeing.

To speak briefly on the actors, there are sophisticated nation-states that target and try to infiltrate systems. There are non-state actors. We've seen the prevalence in recent months of reports that ISIL is developing cyber capabilities. There are state actors and non-state actors. There is cybercrime, as was raised by one of the other members of the committee a moment ago, and there is the rise of cybercriminals who look to steal information or to steal resources.

There are also examples of the so-called hacktivists. These are organizations or people who are trying to be disruptive, and who are trying to disrupt a government service or disrupt a system. There were examples in the last year. In terms of giving a concrete example of those people who are trying to be disruptive, there were a number of so-called denial-of-service attacks. Those are from people or organizations trying to flood the government systems with requests through a variety of systems that slow down or impede legitimate

Canadians trying to do business with the government from being able to do so.

You can see that nuisance and threat activity, and you can see defacement of government websites. The earlier example that was raised was in terms of significant attacks that could be trying to steal intellectual property or trying to infiltrate systems to gain personal information. There was a significant cyber-attack recently with one of our partner countries, and what the cyber-attackers were trying to go after was personnel information, Government of Canada employees and other people who are working for the government.

To underline the point, it's a variety of different threat actors and a variety of different techniques that are being employed for a variety of different ends, all of which either are disrupting systems and trying to infiltrate information, or trying to steal information or shut down systems.

I hope that gives you a bit of an idea of the range of threats and actors we are seeing.

• (1030)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: That is quite clear.

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member.

[English]

The Chair: That's your time. Thanks very much.

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Paul-Hus, and he will split the time with Mr. Bezan. That will be the rest of the questions for the day, so we can sum up and get to committee business.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Bossenmaier, in your handout it says that more than 100 million cyber attacks are directed at the Government of Canada's systems daily. That is huge. I suppose that of that number, there are attacks that are made continually by automated systems. There must also be some attacks being made directly by people.

Do you have an idea of the source of the attacks being made against National Defence?

[English]

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

In terms of the nature of attacks, I'll go back to my earlier comments. They are coming from a variety of sources with everything from sophisticated cyber-actors to the hackers or hacktivists, perhaps in someone's basement or perhaps not. There is a wide variety.

In terms of those that are focused on the Department of National Defence, I would have to refer you to the Department of National Defence because it's their responsibility to have that overall view of their systems. We're there in a support role for them.

With regard to your reference to the 100 million probes we are seeing a day, the variety of different types of activity, some are just probes. They're trying to look at the Government of Canada writ large for the weak spot. There is an old phrase, "the weakest link in the chain". They are looking for weak spots and trying to understand if there are systems that haven't been updated, or if there are weak spots they can try to infiltrate. They are trying to probe. One of CSE's responsibilities is to help thwart those probes on Government of Canada systems.

In terms of using automation, those are all things that are important for us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you.

I have a second question before giving the floor to Mr. Bezan.

In your mandate described in subsection 273.64(1) of the National Defence Act, it mentions an assistance role in paragraph (c): "to provide technical and operational assistance to federal law enforcement and security agencies in the performance of their lawful duties."

Is Bill C-51 currently of capital importance in order for you to be able to perform those duties?

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

[*English*]

In terms of our assistance mandate, federal law enforcement security organizations may request CSE's technical assistance, an important part of our overall mandate and, aptly, that's in part C of our assistance mandate. In order for us to consider the request, the organization has to have the lawful authority to be able to ask us. If an organization has the lawful authority, and as my colleague pointed out, if we've confirmed that they have that, we can consider providing that assistance to them.

In terms of Bill C-51 in particular, that bill has not impacted CSE directly, in the sense it's not changing CSE's authorities, etc. It has altered CSIS' authorities. If they, again, had the lawful authority to ask us, we could consider assisting them in their lawful mandate. But it's not directly affecting our mandate. Our mandate stays the same under that reference to the National Defence Act that you made.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you.

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: We're glad to have CSE here today. I have two quick questions.

First, we always talk about the Five Eyes relationship that you share, but as a branch of National Defence I assume that we're also sharing intelligence with our NATO members. Mr. McKay talked about the Russia cyber-threat, and how they attacked Estonia back in

2008. I wonder if there were lessons learned there that were shared with Canada through CSE.

Second, you talked about protecting critical infrastructure. I know that you mean energy systems and financial systems and things along those lines, but are you also engaged with protecting the cybersecurity for corporations that have defence contracts? I draw your attention to the issue where there was a cyber-attack on a subcontractor for the cruise missile. The schematics were stolen, then sold on the open market. That's how it's believed China got the information to develop their own cruise missiles.

I wonder if you work with defence contractors in Canada who are providing equipment to our military to ensure that they're protecting their systems.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Thank you for the question.

As I noted, we do work with Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada. They have a particular role with regard to—let me see if I can get my acronyms right—CCIRC, the Canadian Cyber Incident Response Centre, that is a link to critical infrastructure providers and a link to the private sector in terms of providing everything from threat mitigation advice to information on if we see something coming, how they can help themselves. We provide information to Public Safety and work with Public Safety dealing with those critical infrastructure providers.

In terms of defence contractors in particular, I would want to confirm in terms of their relationship with CCIRC, but I also would have to confirm in terms of their relationship and how they work with the Department of National Defence.

Mr. James Bezan: Okay. Just the question on the NATO relationship.

The Chair: Very quickly, if you could, please.

Ms. Greta Bossenmaier: Sure.

Madam Bruce, do you want to talk about NATO?

Ms. Shelly Bruce: Sure.

We have very robust sharing relationships with our Five Eyes partners, and obviously we're working, as the chief mentioned, in Operation Impact in a broader coalition context. There are aspects of our work that can be shared beyond the Five Eyes, but they have to be subject to different rules.

The Chair: Very good.

Thank you so much for attending. Your work is fascinating. It's very important to all Canadians.

I want to thank you for your time, and perhaps we can have you back at another time.

We're going to suspend for two minutes to allow you to depart so we can continue on with committee business.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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