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Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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• (1105)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

This is the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence, studying Canada and the defence of North America.

Welcome back to Vice-Admiral Ron Lloyd.

With him today is Commodore Donovan and Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Michel Vigneault.

Thank you for coming to talk about the Canadian navy, naval readiness, and the defence of North America. It's nice to see you again. I don't think I saw you on the Hill on Navy Day, but I know you were probably somewhere around town.

The floor is yours, sir.

Vice-Admiral Ron Lloyd (Commander, Royal Canadian Navy, Department of National Defence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning. *Bonjour*. It is a pleasure and a privilege for Chief Petty Officer, 1st Class, Michel Vigneault, Commodore Casper Donovan, and me to appear in front of you today. I'm happy to be back on Parliament Hill.

Just this Tuesday the RCN was welcomed here for Navy Day, a unique opportunity organized by our friends at the Navy League of Canada. My thanks to all of you who came out to formally recognize the men and women of the Royal Canadian Navy. It was truly an honour.

[Translation]

On behalf of the Royal Canadian Navy, I'd like to thank the committee for its leadership and its wish to get a better understanding of the factors affecting the security and defence of Canada, and in particular, the readiness of the Royal Canadian Navy.

[English]

As commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, I work with the defence team to set the course for the navy within a government policy framework and I provide advice to the chief of the defence staff on how to enable that plan.

The RCN prides itself on being a rapidly deployable force. This is a significant and visible reflection of Canada's commitment to not only contribute but also to lead in times of global crisis and conflict.

I'm very proud of our history as Canada's first responders. We are a navy that has been *parati vero parati*, or “ready, aye, ready”, to respond when called upon during the most significant events of the last century, including World War II, the Korean War, the first Gulf War, and 9/11.

Readiness is about our ability to provide credible naval options to government for employment not only today but, equally as important, tomorrow, and preparations for readiness must begin long before yesterday.

For example, the *Halifax* class modernization, which will be completed shortly, was announced by the government in 2007. Absent that program, we would not enjoy the readiness that we do today. Instead, as a result of obsolescence, we would soon be marginalized in NATO, with a limited ability to contribute to coalition operations, but that is not the navy I am privileged to command today, thanks to the exceptional vision, leadership, dedication, and commitment of previous governments and naval leadership.

Today there are 13 Royal Canadian Navy ships deployed globally, making a difference on behalf of Canada and Canadians. In addition, our submarines have become a crucial element of our international co-operation. HMCS *Windsor* recently took part in a major NATO exercise in the Norwegian Sea. Once that exercise was over, NATO requested the submarine extend its deployment to conduct real-world operations in the North Atlantic.

Your navy is a highly respected force, capable of operating across the full spectrum of operations, from humanitarian assistance through to coalition operations. However, we know we have challenges.

From the RCN's perspective, there are two capability gaps that you are well aware of—the ability to sustain forces at sea, and the ability to provide long-range air defence.

The replenishment gap is anticipated to be partially mitigated next year, with the interim auxiliary oil replenishment vessel currently being fitted out at Davie shipyards, but the gap will not be fully resolved until the *Queenston* class achieves full operational capability at the beginning of the next decade.

To ensure that our personnel do not suffer from skill fade, we have organized dedicated training windows with the armadas of Spain and Chile. Unfortunately, the air defence gap is more problematic. It will not be lessened until the first of the Canadian surface combatants enters service around the middle of the next decade. I am extremely happy to acknowledge that the request for proposals for the Canadian surface combatant was released at 00:01 Eastern Standard Time this morning, and as I speak, a technical briefing is taking place on this important milestone and achievement.

This program is crucial to the RCN's future, and the milestone could not have been achieved without the extraordinary leadership and hard work by Public Services and Procurement Canada; Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada; the Department of National Defence; and Irving Shipbuilding.

When I spoke with industry representatives at Euronaval in Paris last week, I was heartened to hear them characterize the requirement for the Canadian surface combatant as “demanding but achievable”. This was a validation that the 2,000 hours dedicated to refining our requirement with a third party during an intensive reconciliation last summer and the 50 hours of testimony before the independent review panel for defence acquisition last winter was time well spent. I am confident that the ships to be delivered under the national shipbuilding strategy will meet Canada's requirements.

What gives me this confidence? This is not a new undertaking for Canada. Canadian industry has repeatedly built and delivered world-class warships to the Royal Canadian Navy since the 1950s. These were innovative solutions that were world-leading at the time—the *Protecteur* class replenishment ships, the *St. Laurent* and *Iroquois* class destroyers, and the *Halifax* class frigates.

Canadians have much to be proud of. If we use our past success as a reference, I am confident that Canada and the RCN are on a good course as we sail into our future.

During previous testimony for this committee, there were many questions about the future of the RCN. Specifically, how many and what types of ships should Canada have?

I'd like to reframe that discussion by contending that these specific types of questions may only be answered once we take a broader look at how Canada may wish to employ its navy. Indeed, this committee has touched on many of these wider questions in its past studies of Canada's continental defence. These questions include the following.

Does Canada understand that its navy is one of its most flexible and persistent instruments of national power—in effect, our nation's first responders?

What kind of leadership role does Canada seek in contributing to global defence and security?

Does Canada fully appreciate the range of threats that exists in the world today?

Are the resources assigned to our armed forces well balanced to support Canada's defence and foreign policy objectives?

Finally, how much risk is Canada willing to accept when balancing resources and capabilities?

I am confident that these important questions are now being considered in the ongoing defence policy review.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

When I spoke with you in camera, I discussed the Royal Canadian Navy Executive Plan and our four priorities: to ensure excellence in operations at sea; to enable the transition to the future fleet; to evolve the “business of our business”; and to energize our institution. Implicit in all these priorities is our commitment to our people, who are the basis of our readiness: “People first, mission always.”

In fact, this commitment was recently strengthened with the issuance of the Royal Canadian Navy Code of Conduct, which includes the principles of Operation HONOUR, launched by the Chief of Defence Staff. A respectful, professional working environment, free of sexual misconduct, is essential to enable our staff to concentrate on achieving our priorities.

[*English*]

We have also instituted strategies to better recruit reservists, to better track our sailors' sea/shore ratio, and to bring our training system into the 21st century.

From my perspective, the future is bright and the opportunities will be plentiful. By 2018, the RCN expects to introduce the first of the *Harry DeWolf* class Arctic and offshore patrol vessels, with its sister ship, HMCS *Margaret Brooke*, following close astern. We also hope to soon be cutting steel on the first of the *Queenston* class auxiliary oil replenishment ships.

I believe the rest of this decade will see all hands on deck to deliver the largest recapitalization of Canada's navy in its peacetime history.

In conclusion, despite our challenges, which we are working to mitigate, the RCN remains *parati vero parati*, or “ready, aye, ready”. We are transforming our systems and processes to ensure that we are a 21st-century organization, while remaining committed to “people first, mission always”.

The RCN has confidence that Canadian industry, under the national shipbuilding strategy, will deliver world-class warships, just as they have in the past.

When this bright future is shared with young Canadians, I believe they will be prepared to join their navy and serve Canada proudly, knowing they can make a difference at home and abroad, on, above, and below the sea, day and night.

I am optimistic that the plan we're executing is the very foundation of readiness upon which the maritime defence and security of our nation, from coast to coast, will be achieved. This is critically important work.

As we discuss the RCN's future today, on the eve of Canada's sesquicentennial, we do so with the knowledge that some of the surface combatants to be delivered under this strategy will still be in service on the eve of Canada's bicentennial.

Thank you. We look forward to your questions, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you again for coming.

I think I mentioned this last time, but we can't say it enough: thank you, gentlemen, for your service to the country.

We'll start with seven-minute questions.

The first question goes to you, Mrs. Romanado. You have the floor.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I thank the witnesses for their participation today, and the public for their attendance.

[English]

I want to reiterate what our chair just mentioned. I want to thank all of you for your service to Canada. I know that the RCN is known as "the force generator". I have that nickname here on the Hill myself, as my two sons are currently serving, so I am a force generator.

That said, I have a couple of questions regarding your testimony.

We have heard a lot about procurement and the needs of the Royal Canadian Navy. I'm sure my colleagues will elaborate on that, but I want to go into a different thematic.

We are studying the defence of North America. The first component was our aerial readiness. We visited NORAD. While there, we heard a bit about how right now our commitment with NORAD is for maritime warning, but not for control. I'd like to get your thoughts on that. As part of the defence policy review, we are looking at our defence policy and our commitments to both NORAD and NATO. What are your thoughts on revisiting that control component? Could you elaborate a bit on what you think of that?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: In terms of maritime warning and maritime control, I know that as we look at the evolution of NORAD, we have a number of factors and considerations. As for where we currently find ourselves right now, I just had a conversation with Commodore Angus Topsy, who is currently working in NORAD and is taking a look at what that command and control structure would look like if we moved more from maritime warning to maritime control, as you've articulated.

The challenges of dealing with complexity at sea and what that would mean in a naval context are a little more demanding and challenging than what we typically have experienced from an air perspective, but in terms of the way the system is working today, I'm comfortable with the lines of communication and dialogue between our two coastal commanders and the articulation of what's taking place, both domestically through our maritime security operations centres and in sharing the information more broadly. It's currently working. I'll wait to see what the further analysis of the team

provides as they do their ongoing work in the analysis of options going forward.

• (1115)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you.

We've heard that our defence of North America and the defence of our own sovereignty really takes a system of systems. We heard about the fact that the north warning system is going to expire in 2025. Given the realities of climate change, the accessibility of the Arctic passageway, and Russia's and China's interest in our north, could you elaborate on what you would recommend for us in terms of the northern passageway and surveillance in the north and its importance?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: The surveillance of all of Canada is important.

As you indicated, it's very much a system of systems. It's a whole-of-government requirement in doing that. That's why I was really happy that Commissioner Jody Thomas and the navy were standing side by side on Navy Day. I don't know if she was quite happy with that title, but as I said then and as I'll say now, we're two sides of a coin and indivisible in looking after the safety, security, and defence of our country.

We need to start that system with space-based capabilities, which we're currently moving out on, and then we have to make sure that the lines of communication are enabled between the government departments responsible for those types of activities. I'm happy to say that there are many navies around the world that are looking at our maritime security operation centres as a model by which they can look after the safety, security, and sovereignty of their nations. I think that's a great story for Canada.

Also, we need to work with the army, navy, and air force under the rubric of all the exercises that we are currently taking part in in the Arctic. I think those are foundational to understanding the challenges. I say to people that what's interesting when we're operating in the Arctic is that in many respects it's almost more demanding than deploying overseas. The distance from Esquimalt to Nanisivik, the naval base we're constructing, is about the same distance from Esquimalt to Japan. To go from Halifax to Nanisivik is about the same distance as going from Halifax to London.

There are many challenges. In many respects, although it's a sovereign operation, it's almost expeditionary in terms of going forward.

There are a number of aspects. I'm really happy that Admiral Norman had the vision to appoint the command team for the HMCS *Harry DeWolf*. They have been working with navies around the world and our own Coast Guard to understand how to operate in the Arctic. They've actually done a number of reconnaissance trips into the Arctic to better understand how we can sustain and maintain those platforms going forward.

To end where I started, I guess, it's a full team. It's the whole of government and it's a system of systems, and the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Coast Guard both have important roles to play there. I'm really happy that those lines of communication exist. We're pressing on with that.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Do I have some time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: At the moment, the Royal Canadian Navy is the smallest in terms of members, with 13,500 in total. Can you talk to us a bit about the challenges in recruitment and retention for our Royal Canadian Navy?

We recently announced the reopening of the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean as a degree-granting institution, and if that will assist us in terms of the recruitment, not the retention.... For the retention, we've heard about the fact that they need to be out at sea and practising and so on. Could you talk to us a bit about your recruitment and retention difficulties?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: There are two aspects to recruiting.

There's recruiting for the reserve force, and we're taking steps with the Canadian Army to expedite that activity. The commander of the army and I are working with our teams to come up with a model by which, in our perfect world, someone would be able to enter the door of a militia unit or a naval reserve division and within a month be recruited. That's what we're really working hard to try to accomplish.

We recognize that the recruiting for the regular force is done by the chief of military personnel. The chief of the defence staff and General Whitecross are working extraordinarily hard to try to streamline those processes as well, so that we can recruit sailors expeditiously.

I think when young Canadians take a look at their navy, much as they would a stock, they want to see if it's on the rise or the fall. If there's a bright future for the institution and for the army or the air force, I think they're willing to invest themselves. From my perspective today, the request for proposal for the Canadian surface combatant acknowledges that there's a bright future for the Royal Canadian Navy. The fact that we're building the *Harry DeWolf* Arctic offshore patrol ships is real. The great imagery on the Internet to reinforce that fact portrays that bright future.

As it pertains to retention, that's something we own. That's why you'll hear us refer to "people first, mission always". It's why we're trying to take our training system out of PowerPoint and into hands-on experiential-type training activities.

We were actually putting our sailors to sea too long. We were putting them in a position of having to choose between their family and the navy. As I've said to them, if I had to choose between the navy or my family, I'd choose my family, so why should they be any different? We're making sure that we can track their sea/shore ratio. Where there's a requirement that we have to break the number of days allocated, it will actually be a flag officer making that decision.

When I was at sea on board HMCS *Vancouver* during RIMPAC, I asked a number of sailors how many had been attach-posted. In an attach posting, we take you from one ship and move you to another

ship, or we take you out of your shore posting and send you to a ship that needs that skill set to go to sea. Some people had been attach-posted, or taken away from their family at short notice, up to five times. Once again, that's problematic. We're forcing them to choose between their family or the navy. We've implemented a process by which we'll also track the number of attach postings our sailors are doing.

Now, we have to recognize that some of those attach postings are good cholesterol and some are bad cholesterol. If it's taking a sailor who actually wants to deploy into the Asia-Pacific region and go to Vietnam, then that's good cholesterol. If we had to rip that same sailor away from his family with 24 or 36 hours' notice, then that's bad cholesterol. We need to make a differentiation between those types of attach postings.

We're very much trying to leverage business intelligence tools in order to be able to provide those reports and to be able to identify where we may have challenges or issues as we go forward. As you've indicated, we need to retain those sailors. As the chief of the team will say, how long does it take to get a petty officer with 15 years' experience? Fifteen years. That's why we're very much focused on retention.

Chief, do you have anything to add?

• (1120)

The Chair: I have to move on to the next questioner. We'll be able to circle back on that one.

Vadm Ron Lloyd: The chief always gets seen off.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: It was interesting, so we'll circle back on that.

Ms. Gallant, you have the floor.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Chairman, before I get started, today is once again another time that the CDS has stood us up. I would like to find out whether or not we have rescheduled him to come to our committee.

The Chair: I believe it's the 15th.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: You mean the 15th of November.

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay. Thank you very much.

It's not that we are not excited to have the vice-admiral back; we are thrilled to have you back to put your commentary on the official record. Welcome, Commodore Donovan, as well as Michel Vigneault.

Rather than go over some of the things we've talked about before, I'd like to use this opportunity to first thank Admiral Lloyd for the kind invitation he extended to all parliamentarians. Both Pierre Paul-Hus and I took him up on the offer to go on the submarine. While we've toured submarines in the past, we've never had the opportunity to go to sea and go under the water. It's truly an extraordinary experience for any Canadian, and it will really enrich the study we're doing right now.

Thank you also to Commodore Donovan, who in the past has been my captain for about a week on the frigate *Vancouver*. I understand that you've been decorated for putting up with me for an entire week.

With that, I would like to focus on the position that you're in now, which is the director general of naval force development. It is my understanding that you're considering what the navy of the future, decades ahead, will look like. My first question, since we're mentioning the great procurement that is being announced today through our Conservative national shipbuilding strategy, is whether, in your current capacity, you were consulted in the preparation of the request for proposals for the surface combatant.

• (1125)

Commodore C.P. Donovan (Director General, Naval Force Development, Royal Canadian Navy, Department of National Defence): Thank you for the question.

It's a good one, because what I think many people may not see or appreciate is that requests for proposals are the reflection of a massive team effort. The Royal Canadian Navy does have a team of individuals who represent the navy and its development and defining of the requirement. However, we work hand in hand with the Department of National Defence, particularly the assistant deputy minister for materiel's team, who are responsible for turning what would be a statement of operational requirement into all of the contractual documents that go out to industry.

In the case of the CSC RFP, because of the procurement approach that's being followed, that team also includes Irving Shipbuilding and the other two key departments in any major procurement for the Department of National Defence, Public Services and Procurement Canada and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

"Consulted", arguably would be a bit of an understatement. We have collectively had a big team, with their hands dirty, working hard for months and months on that RFP.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We know all about the government's plans to eventually phase out the use of carbon-based fuel. Are you looking at different fuel types for the vessels of the future?

Cmdre C.P. Donovan: There are specifications that would be met in the Canadian surface combatant project, and all of our ships, pertaining to the fuels that are required in those ships. Typically those specifications and the details of them are more the purview of our materiel group, because they get into very specific types of fuel items, such as flashpoint and viscosity. While I can't speak to the specifics, I know there's always work done to specify the proper fuel.

Basically, if there is a fuel that can be used in those ships that would be greener than the fuel today, then I have no doubt that those ships would be designed to accommodate that type of fuel. I'm just not aware of the specifics of whether we're pursuing a certain type of greener fuel.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I know that in general we have biofuels. There's a company in my riding, Ensyn Technologies, that's looking at different naval...actually, I believe they have a project they're working on for one nation's navy. That's why I asked.

At the last meeting, Admiral Lloyd talked about the necessity of submarines, the growing concerns in the Arctic, and how we need to

have eyes above the water, on the surface of the water, and below the water. With this international concern about the Arctic, especially with the buildup by Mr. Putin across the pole, it would look like the submarines are procurement we're going to need in the future. Perhaps you're already looking at that in your capacity.

Diesel engines are not suitable for under-ice navigation. Since it's of critical importance that we continue to have the submarine capability, for our future sub acquisition, does it make sense to include nuclear-powered subs when developing the request for proposals on that procurement?

• (1130)

Cmdre C.P. Donovan: Right now I would say there's no specific procurement under way. The Department of National Defence is looking at submarines and submarine capability and where that needs to go. As we work through that analysis with a view to the future, I'm convinced that we'll look at all the different angles and look at the challenge of operating in the Arctic, look at the challenge of that environment, and provide the best advice we can in the future.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We see that drones, in addition to our new Cyclone helicopters, are being employed by the navy. After that terrible EH-101 order cancellation, we finally got Cyclones being delivered to our ships down east. Now we're starting to see the emergence of driverless vehicles. In Amsterdam, for example, there are different ferry-type boats they are testing in the canals.

In your capacity, in looking into the future of the navy, do you see driverless vessels as being a part of our overall complement in the Royal Canadian Navy?

Cmdre C.P. Donovan: I would say that in general, uninhabited vehicles, unmanned vehicles, and autonomous vehicles are clearly in the future of most navies around the world.

In the context of the Royal Canadian Navy, in terms of what you referred to as driverless vehicles, we have been operating with vehicles like that for many years to date. In fact, we've used them predominantly as targets for gunnery systems. You have a vessel, a small boat, with no one in the boat, which is remotely operated by operators on another ship. We conduct gunnery and weapons firings on those boats because they simulate one type of threat that a warship may come up against in a real operational theatre.

We have looked to the future and we currently have other procurement projects under way to deliver systems that are autonomous or remotely operated in nature. We're continually looking at that entire space to find the right capabilities that sailors will need in the future.

The Chair: That's your time, Ms. Gallant.

I want to welcome Ms. Blaney. The floor is yours.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Thank you.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your dedicated work and commitment to this country. It's tremendously important, and we all appreciate it.

I also just want to make a quick comment on what you were talking about with regard to attraction and retention.

I had the privilege of going to see the Royal Canadian Sea Cadets in Powell River recently, and the commanding officer, Lieutenant McLennan, chatted with me about some of the challenges they have around getting uniforms in time to really keep those kids involved.

I was impressed by the number of young people who were there, working really hard. I continue to see a lot of retired naval folks surrounding them and promoting the greatness of what you do. Thank you for what you do, and thank you to all those who work hard to make sure we have a strong navy.

I'm really interested in maintenance, so my question is for you, Commander Lloyd.

In a letter dated June 8, 2016, titled "Fleet maintenance facilities strategic capabilities statement" and signed by you as rear admiral and deputy commander of the RCN, it was outlined that a new NEM, a naval engineering and maintenance strategic capability decision model, had been assessed and deemed worthy for the purpose of providing the RCN with a sound and repeatable process to validate present and future fleet capability needs.

There were four models outlined. The D models have the FMF—fleet maintenance facility—as the primary. The CD model is a hybrid, and the contractor is the primary. It's this point that I would like to pursue a little bit.

This hybrid model outlines that the contractor will take the lead in most areas of responsibility. This will require the contractor to co-locate on FMF sites. New buildings, rearranging current personnel, or sharing tools and equipment with existing sites will be an issue. There will also be a need to have rigorous accountability systems established to determine who will be in charge, and when, on each task and job.

I just have a couple of questions that come to mind. Have you studied other allied nations' navies that have gone to a greater reliance on contractors to identify whether there have been any negative impacts in terms of efficiency, meeting operational readiness requirements, IP conflicts, authority strains, and security?

I'll let you answer that one, and then I'll follow up with a second question.

• (1135)

VAdm Ron Lloyd: Obviously the maintenance of our ships is really important. As a country, we're very fortunate to have our fleet maintenance facilities because of the second- and third-line maintenance activities that they're able to provide to us in terms of delivering readiness.

Three years ago we had a paper commissioned by Captain Don Smith, who was a commanding officer at one of the fleet maintenance facilities. He basically took a look at these four broad options that you articulated and put forth a number of recommendations that we, the navy, needed to consider to ensure that we had the best maintenance framework to look after our platforms.

Working with the chief engineer of the navy, Commodore Simon Page, who also works for assistant deputy minister Pat Finn, the

team has done a great amount of analysis to come up with the right model and the pros and cons of the various aspects. In doing their analysis, they've taken a look at other models used by some of our allies in order to understand their best practices and what was successful and what was not.

I've also had conversations with a number of my peers about what has worked well for them, or not, in terms of going forward. I think, as I signed my name to, that the best model is one in which we leverage the strengths of both, putting us in a win-win situation going forward.

Simon Page and the commanding officers of our maintenance facilities are working very hard with our maintenance facilities to assure them that there is a future in terms of what the fleet maintenance facilities deliver from a strategic capability. I don't think that contracting out all of that maintenance is in our best interest. There are definitely strategic capabilities that we need to retain, particularly on those systems that are unique to warships.

Some of those aspects, in terms of a marinized diesel engine...I think everyone here would be comfortable in recognizing that those competencies exist elsewhere.

What we're trying to do is make sure that we're as effective as possible where we need to be and as efficient as possible where we need to be. We also have to recognize that there's a difference, so we're trying to leverage those efficiencies to make sure we get the most out of every dollar we're given.

Many of you have heard me say that we're trying to run the navy like a business now, but rather than measuring our profits in dollars and cents, we're trying to measure our profits in materiel, technical, personnel, and combat readiness.

We are working hard to find out what that best model is. I think what you will see as we go forward is that we'll have higher levels of serviceability because we're leveraging the strengths of what industry can provide and the strategic asset that those maintenance facilities represent.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Will you be able to provide the committee with those reports?

VAdm Ron Lloyd: I can't see why not.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Have you determined how current levels of FMF trades and support staffing will be affected in five years, 10 years, 20 years?

VAdm Ron Lloyd: It's a challenge.

In the last three years, we've done an extraordinary amount of work in terms of trying to baseline the numbers currently working at our fleet maintenance facilities. Right now, we're currently at about 900, plus or minus anomalies from each of the two coasts.

Then, as we project into the future five or 10 years, we need to have an understanding of where industry strengths are and where our strengths are, and then we have to balance the workforce accordingly. Once these large in-service report contracts go out for the *Queenston* class and the Arctic/offshore patrol ship, we'll begin to have an understanding of what that new paradigm will look like.

Once we have that information, I think we'll be in a much better position to specify or define what that report should look like.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Am I still good for time?

• (1140)

The Chair: You have time for a quick one.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Okay.

Will the FMF lose its capacity and the DND lose its flexibility if staff member numbers in trades and equipment are lost?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: It's not black and white like that. We can't say that it's going to be lost.

From my perspective, what you'll see is a reorientation of the focus to leverage the strengths of what our fleet maintenance facilities can deliver. We'll lean into their strengths in terms of that new model.

However, we can't afford to lose our ability to deploy ships. That has to be stated. At every period of decision-making, the readiness of our ships is paramount. The decision-making that will take place as we look at that will be to ensure that when the Government of Canada calls its first responder, that we're "ready, aye, ready" to deploy. All of that will be taken into context as we make decisions going forward.

The Chair: Thanks for that.

Mr. Gerretsen, you have the floor.

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

I echo the comments of my colleagues. Gentlemen, thank you for being here, and thank you for your service to our country. I genuinely believe that it's because of our military personnel and what they do that we have the amazing quality of life that we do and we don't have a lot of the problems that are found throughout other parts of the world. Thank you for your service.

Admiral, you were talking about the Arctic in particular in response to some of the questions from my colleagues. I'm curious as to what you see as the real threat in the Arctic. Is it a military presence? Is it economic opportunities? Is it exploitation of resources?

What do you see now, and what do you foresee into the future, as being the real threats that we face in the Arctic?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: To begin, safety and security obviously is a concern in the Arctic.

In terms of threats, there are two elements to threat. There is capability and there is intent. As you take a look at the capabilities and intents that currently exist out there, that begins to frame your assessment of the threat.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Sorry to interrupt, but is it safe to say that the capabilities will be changing as a result of the changing environment in the Arctic? The opportunities will change, right?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: The opportunities will change. You will need the capabilities to operate in the Arctic. I think the competition for resources in the fullness of time is something that we'll need to continually be aware of as a nation.

Given that we have the fifth-largest economic exclusive zone and the second-largest continental shelf in the world, those are areas of sensitivity. In terms of the sovereignty aspects, as you know, there are only a couple of claims against the sovereignty in the Arctic.

From those perspectives, both with key allies.... I have every expectation that they'll be dealt with through international law in the fullness of time, and then, as you say, we'll monitor intent going forward.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Do you see a naval arms race in the Arctic?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: I think what we're seeing globally, as people understand the links between the sea and prosperity and security, is increased naval presence on the world's oceans. You're seeing increased proliferation of forces in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. You're seeing other navies increasing their capabilities more broadly. I think you're seeing an increased importance being placed on the global maritime commons.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: The majority of Canadians, when we talk about the Arctic and sovereignty, relate the security threats in the Arctic to the ambitions of Russia.

Do you view that as being the case? What other potential actors do you see having an interest, if any? I'm not trying to put words in your mouth.

• (1145)

Vadm Ron Lloyd: No. With the Arctic, as we say in Leadmark 2050, just as all lines of longitude converge in the Arctic, so too are a number of nations' interests converging on the Arctic. Other than the five Arctic nations and the Arctic Council, you're seeing other nations operating in the Arctic. From that perspective, we need to continue to be aware of who's demonstrating that interest globally, what their interests are, and what could motivate their interests.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Can you comment as to who is demonstrating those interests now?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: You just have to take a look at the nations that are operating icebreakers and the like in the Arctic. They might obviously have interests there, but for more detail, I guess the Coast Guard would probably be the ones to ask.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Thank you very much. Thank you Mr. Chair.

If there's any time remaining, I'll turn it over to Ms. Romanado or Mr. Fisher.

The Chair: There are a couple of minutes.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you. I did have one question about your operating budget. I'm sorry that I wasn't here for the first three weeks of this session, as I was travelling on another committee.

Is it possible for you to share with us your operating budget on an annual basis, and how much of that operating budget—it could be a percentage—is dedicated to R and D? I'm following up on Madam Gallant's question about innovative and new technologies. I'm curious about how much is dedicated toward R and D.

Vadm Ron Lloyd: The overall naval budget is approximately \$2 billion, of which the operating and maintenance budget of the navy is approximately \$500 million. About a quarter of our overall budget is governed by the navy, and the research and development that takes place, as it pertains to the navy, is delivered by ADM S and T under assistant deputy minister Marc Fortin.

What we do is have a governance process by which we are intimately working with ADM S and T and his team to address those R and D aspects. Commodore Donovan is our point man for our futures and for R and D.

Casper, would you be so kind as to highlight a couple of the initiatives and the resources allocated to us from ADM S and T?

Cmdre C.P. Donovan: We do work closely with ADM S and T, and the reason I'm—as the Admiral calls it—the point man is that much of what we want the R and D and the science and technology folks focused on is the future. They do some work for the here and now of today's navy, but mostly they're focused on the future.

As was mentioned when one of your colleagues asked the question earlier about autonomous and remote systems, we have scientists working across a number of themes. Depending on the nature of the work, it could be very specific, discrete, and almost like a very clear package, whereas other areas of effort are much more conceptual in just thinking through a challenge and scoping out what might be in the art of the possible. Then we look at that work to decide whether there's something discrete that we want to drill into and flesh out.

It spans a wide spectrum of activity with scientists from across Canada. That community leverages and will share R and D research across the Five Eyes as well as with our NATO partners, using a variety of mechanisms that the S and T community connects with.

Vadm Ron Lloyd: I can elaborate on the importance of innovation and experimentation. One of the things that we've recently stood up is X-Ship, an experimental ship. We've taken one of our frigates, HMCS *Montréal*, and in anticipation of receiving our future fleet, we are trying to discover where we can embrace innovation and experimentation in order to ensure that all facets of what we are doing at sea can be incorporated into the Royal Canadian Navy before we accept those new ships.

The first series of experiments will largely be personnel-driven. What's interesting from my perspective is that as other nations are embracing unmanned technologies right now, they are having problems manning their unmanned technologies. It's fascinating when you consider that, in terms of going forward.

The first set will be experimentation on the personnel initiatives, and in the second phase we'll lean more into the technological. We have to make sure that the legal framework is in place so that if some industry wants to conduct experimentation on board our ship, it is not penalized in terms of competing—for example, if we've proven that it's a revolutionary new capability that is going to change warfare forever, yet they can't compete because it might be problematic in terms of fair competition.

We have to make sure we get that right so that we don't disadvantage the navy in terms of being able to accept those

capabilities, but it's equally important so we don't disadvantage industry that's coming forward.

• (1150)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We're going to move to five-minute questions. Mr. Fisher, you have the floor.

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

Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you very much for being here.

I had the honour this morning of joining the ombudsman at the Liz Hoffman Memorial Commendation ceremony, where the ombudsman honoured four wonderful serving or retired members.

Vice-Admiral, you spoke about capability gaps. Almost everyone who has appeared before this committee has spoken to capability gaps. I'm always interested in the right mix of naval assets, and I'd like to ask you what I asked some academics previously.

Could you give me a grocery list of what we need short term, medium term, and long term as far as naval assets go? If you had the chequebook out and you had the ability to take care of either the forces at sea or the long-range air defence issues you spoke about, is that something you'd be able to give me?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: No.

Mr. Darren Fisher: You don't have a prioritized list of what we need.

Vadm Ron Lloyd: Of course we do. We have that.

We've done a lot of work over the last several years to get our best understanding of what the government policy is and what the requirements are to deliver on that policy. There is analysis that substantiates the largest recapitalization of the Royal Canadian Navy in its peacetime history.

The question is not what we need in terms of the Royal Canadian Navy. The more accurate question is, how does the government anticipate it is going to use this navy in the future? An understanding of that adjusts the paradigm in terms of whether there will be a greater or a lesser appetite for the deployment of its navy in the future.

Many of the scholars are calling the 21st century a maritime century. As we look at that, what are the capabilities that are going to be required? The capabilities that will be required, to go back to the concept of team.... From our perspective, you'll need the capabilities to sustain the force and to operate on, below, and above the world's oceans, and then you'll need the complex networks and sensors to provide the intelligence and the sophisticated command and control required to enable forces to operate at sea.

From my perspective, what we are currently delivering will meet the government's requirements.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Okay. If we agree that ships are the lifeblood of the global economy, how vulnerable do you feel we are right now with regard to our commerce globally?

VAdm Ron Lloyd: In terms of commerce, there are eight choke points around the world. The lifeblood of nations' economies flows through those choke points. The statistic that we use in Leadmark 2050 is that on any given day, Canadian Tire has a third of its inventory on the high seas.

Globally there's a recognition that this needs to be safeguarded and ensured. Although you're seeing a 48% increase in the budgets of the defences of the Indo-Asia-Pacific, you're seeing a 60% increase in their navies that is probably a direct correlation of the link between safety, security, and prosperity and the oceans in the future.

What I think is troubling is, for example, the attacks in the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb against warships through one of those choke points. It's something people need to be monitoring. Is that a data point? Is that a one-off? What would that actually represent? I think there are a number of considerations that need to be addressed when you're taking a look at those types of questions.

• (1155)

Mr. Darren Fisher: We retired two replenishment ships prematurely. We have a stopgap measure coming forward. You mentioned that soon steel would be cut for the next replenishment ship. Can you tell me a little bit about that? I wasn't aware that we were that close to cutting steel for that.

VAdm Ron Lloyd: I'll let Casper provide the dates in terms of the specifics of—

Mr. Darren Fisher: I'd also be interested in your thoughts on that stopgap measure and when the replenishment ship from Davie is coming forward as well.

VAdm Ron Lloyd: Regarding the interim AOR, they're currently working on that. I was informed yesterday that we're about 10% ahead of schedule. Having said that, I'll probably jinx us.

The goal right now is to have that capability, and ideally it will be operational towards the end of next year. We've already made plans in terms of where we think the best operating base would be. Obviously that's flexible, depending on the future security environment and what the factors will be toward the end of next year. Then we look forward to integrating that ship into our naval operations.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Do you mean the end of 2018?

VAdm Ron Lloyd: The end of 2017 is when we anticipate that interim AOR being available for operations with the navy. That's correct.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Casper, they're cutting soon for the future replenishment ship?

Cmdre C.P. Donovan: For the *Queenston* class, the current plan sees cutting the steel in the 2018 time frame, with a view to delivering the first one to the navy in the 2021 timeframe. It's predicated, though, on the work that Vancouver Shipyards is currently doing on Coast Guard vessels, but that reflects the latest intent.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Do I have—

The Chair: You're out of time. Sorry.

We'll have time to circle back at the end.

I'm going to have to go to Mr. Paul-Hus.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Thank you very much, guys.

[Translation]

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

My question is in the same vein as that of my colleague. We have a document here entitled "Leadmark 2050", which I invite you to consult if you haven't already done so. This explanatory document, written in layperson's terms, is designed to help the public, and politicians like us, understand the situation, and the navy's needs. It's very important.

Offshore patrol ships are being built for use in the Arctic. The Cyclones will be ready for anti-submarine combat next year or in 2018. So some of the news is good.

That said, I'd like us to discuss the threat question. In your statement, you asked whether we were aware of the threat. There were questions on the subject. I can tell you that I want Canada to avoid experiencing a situation of the kind the United States experienced on September 11, 2001.

When we visited NORAD, we noticed that eyes were turned outside the country, not in. Two weeks ago, Cheryl and I visited the Marine Security Operations Centre in Halifax. I was able to observe maritime traffic on screens. I was very surprised at the number of ships circulating. It was like a highway.

What is the worst threat we can anticipate in the short term—that is, within five years—and is there sufficient capacity to face it? We can see what our fleet's operational readiness is. There will be new acquisitions, but it will take time. I'd like to know how we can counter the threat in question.

[English]

VAdm Ron Lloyd: The way you frame the question speaks to the threat. It's an understanding of what's taking place in our areas of responsibility.

To go back to that system of systems, it's not just about the Arctic: it's about understanding what's taking place above, on, and below the seas in terms of the vast maritime estates with which Canada has been blessed. We need to continue working very closely, as you indicated, through our maritime security operation centres to ensure those lines of dialogue are open. As opposed to a right to know, you've articulated the responsibility to share information and intelligence to ensure that we're completely interoperable with our allies, in particular the United States Navy, in terms of what that represents.

We have a very good tradition, as a navy, of being completely interoperable with the United States Navy. For example, there were occasions when we've deployed one of our frigates instead of one of their destroyers as recognition of that interoperability.

I was fortunate enough to be commanding officer of *Charlotte-town* when we deployed as a member of a U.S. carrier strike group to the Middle East back in 2000. Immediately after we returned in July, there were the tragic events of 9/11, to which you just referred. When Canada wanted to demonstrate its commitment and leadership, we deployed a task group. Canada's navy had the furthest to go of all navies, and we were first on station in demonstrating that commitment and support to our closest ally.

In terms of what we need to do, we need to ensure that we're sharing information, that the lines of communication are open, and that we're completely interoperable in the case of that shock that you indicate could transpire, both looking in or out.

That's what we need to do to ensure we mitigate those threats.

• (1200)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: In connection with the concept of intervention, I have a question about submarines.

The offshore patrol ships that are being built will ensure a presence in Arctic waters. We might need to intervene more boldly. Should we not prioritize the purchase of better submarines and additional submarines with the capacity to intervene in such cases? My submarine trip helped me truly understand what an important weapon it is. The kind of weapon to which I am referring is more of a combat weapon.

In your opinion, should we purchase submarines?

[English]

Vadm Ron Lloyd: We have an extraordinary submarine capability.

As I indicated when I was here last, very few Canadians appreciate the fact that some of the western world's most advanced technologies are in our submarines. That's a tremendous capability they provide to that system of systems. That's why when NATO looks to conduct operations, it's extraordinarily happy to have our submarines participate in that activity.

Undersea warfare, or anti-submarine warfare, to go back to team sport, is very much a team sport. When we look at what NATO is doing across the board in terms of understanding that very complex and dynamic environment, we see that it's all about the team.

Our submarines provide us an opportunity to access not only the decision-making table but the exceptionally classified aspects of anti-submarine warfare. As I indicated when I was here last, our submariners are doing great work on behalf of Canada and Canadians every day, but unfortunately, because of the classification of what they're doing, much like our special forces, there's not a lot we can share in an unclassified environment.

As we continue to work as a member of that team and as our submarines continue to do the great work they've been doing, when you look at how often *Windsor* was at sea last year, you see that we're delivering on our requirement.

The Chair: Mr. Rioux is next.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Hello. Thank you for being here.

You are starting to be a regular here. This week, you were here as part of Navy Day.

Earlier, my colleague Ms. Romanado spoke about recruitment. She opened the door with respect to the Royal Military College in Saint-Jean. Could this attract more French Canadians and better trained people who will accordingly remain with the Royal Canadian Navy longer?

• (1205)

CPO 1 Michel Vigneault (Chief Petty Officer, 1st Class, Royal Canadian Navy, Department of National Defence): Thank you for your question.

With respect to recruitment, the Royal Military College helps Quebec recruits tremendously. I got my basic training at Saint-Jean several years ago. With respect to retention, I am looking back and asking myself why I decided to stay in the navy. The incentives were the opportunities to train at the highest levels, work with the best equipment, and travel the world. I think these reasons are still valid for the young women and men now joining the navy. We will give them opportunities for training and education at the highest levels—opportunities that are the envy of many of our allies—and to work in different places throughout the world, with the best equipment possible.

Mr. Jean Rioux: More specifically, might the restoration of French-language university education at the Royal Military College in Saint-Jean be an asset in attracting candidates?

CPO 1 Michel Vigneault: Yes.

For young Quebecers who are more comfortable doing their university studies in French, it's definitely an asset. As part of that education, they will also have the opportunity to learn English. I think it's already part of the course of study. It's certainly an advantage.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Thank you.

[English]

Vadm Ron Lloyd: It's important to understand and appreciate that in the Royal Canadian Navy, one of our strengths is diversity. In terms of where we need to go to be more successful, about a month and a half ago I was taking a look at the senior staff of the Royal Canadian Navy. I looked out into the audience and I said, "This is not the reflection of Canada. We are not a reflection of Canada. We need to be a reflection of Canada."

Whether it's visible minorities, whether it's women, whether it's the LGBTQ community, we have fully embraced the fact that if we're not a more diverse organization going forward, it will actually be a weakness.

Right now we're trying to ensure we get the message out that we embrace diversity. It wasn't by accident that I was in the Toronto Pride parade with the chief in uniform with the rest of the leadership in terms of reinforcing that commitment.

You can put things on paper, as you've just articulated, but it's not until you actually do something that people can physically see that people actually believe that you're committed to that idea, so at every turn right now, whether it's the francophone community, whether it's visible minority communities across the land, we are enforcing our commitment to that diversity. It makes us stronger, it makes us better, and we're going to try to do a much better job in terms of enabling it.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: It's good news that you acknowledge that 25% of Canada's population are French Canadians and that they have equal opportunities in the navy.

We spoke about supply vessels. Canada has begun leasing such ships. At the Davie shipyard, a container ship is being converted into a supply ship.

How was the decision to lease ships arrived at? It seems to me that we should have bought new ones.

[English]

VAdm Ron Lloyd: I think the interim AOR, first and foremost, is a recognition of the navy and the government embracing innovation. Going through the entire process of procuring a ship takes time, and it's problematic, because as I indicated in my opening comments, right now we're currently undertaking the largest recapitalization of the Royal Canadian Navy in its peacetime history. To actually free up the people to look after a procurement like that... They just don't exist right now, because everyone's all hands on deck trying to deliver the *Queenston* class, the Arctic offshore patrol ship, and the Canadian surface combatant.

When you take a look at the demands on PSPC, ISED, the navy, Pat Finn and his team, it is quite literally all hands on deck. An opportunity to leverage a service, as opposed to an acquisition, was innovative, and it recognizes that everyone across the board will be really busy on the acquisition side going forward.

Casper, do you have anything to add?

• (1210)

Cmdr C.P. Donovan: The only thing I would add is that it also recognizes that having that element of support for navy ships while they are under way is incredibly important. If you want to have the capability that the navy can provide, especially if you need to send it somewhere around the world, then the ability to get fuel and other supplies from a ship is incredibly important.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Is the timeline—

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Is the timeline being complied with—

[English]

The Chair: Jean, I am going to have to give the floor to Mr. Bezan.

Mr. Bezan, you have the floor.

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

Thank you, Chief, Admiral, and Commodore for being with us today. It is important that we are having this discussion at this high level, especially today when we are announcing the request for proposals on our new surface combatants.

I want to go back to what Pierre was taking about on threats, because I think this is critical in how we are evolving in the navy. When we look at the proliferation of submarines and icebreakers by both Russia and China, when we look at the geopolitics that China has been playing in the South China Sea and whether they're going to respect the UN's Convention on the Law of the Sea and whether that may also transpire in the Arctic itself, and when we look at Russia's very aggressive stance that they've been showing in the North Atlantic, in the Baltics, and in the Black Sea, there's just so much to be concerned about.

The Royal Canadian Navy has done a fabulous job of being a protection force, a security force, making sure that our trade routes remain open and working alongside our coalition partners.

Are we ready to deal with this new evolving threat with the proliferation of the subs and icebreakers? Are we ready to deal with Russia's aggressive stance in the Arctic as they increase their naval presence, their air force presence? Definitely we see them threatening Canadian airspace with their fighter jets and Bear bombers.

Are we able to engage and protect our sovereignty in the Arctic, first and foremost, and also deal with the cybersecurity and the electronic warfare that Russia has engaged in, as we witnessed in the Baltic and in the Black Sea? They've done flyovers of NATO ships when we were in manoeuvres in those waters.

VAdm Ron Lloyd: That's a fantastic question.

There are a couple of things. I'll go back to "threat" in terms of capability and intent. If a nation has intent but no capability, then you can deal with it. If a nation has significant capability and potentially no intent, how do you continue to monitor that over the fullness of time?

In terms of our preparation and our readiness, as I indicated in my opening remarks, the *Halifax* class modernization, which remains on budget and on time—very few people hear about it, probably because it is on budget and on time—has provided us with exceptional capability for the navy. As Commodore Donovan was indicating, when we put out the request for proposal, we did so looking ahead at those future threats, recognizing that with the timelines we're dealing with, we'll be delivering cutting-edge technology and delivering on our requirements to go forward.

Going back to understanding and how we can deal with potential threats moving forward, it wasn't by accident this last summer that Admiral Newton led *Cutlass Fury*, which was basically NATO participation—although it wasn't sanctioned by NATO—in terms of understanding the challenges and demands of theatre anti-submarine warfare and making sure there was, once again.... It's back to making sure that the linkages and the interoperability between the air forces, the surface forces, and the submarine forces are understood by all.

As we look into the other aspects of the world, we see HMCS *Vancouver* currently deployed in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. In the Atlantic, we have the NATO alliance, which we know well, but those procedures that we know intimately well don't currently exist in the Pacific. As the minister has indicated, we need to be more persistent in the Indo-Asia-Pacific. The chief has given a little more clarification in terms of what we'll do there, because we need to establish those relationships, those partnerships, and those friendships that will be crucial to operating in areas of the world where we may conceivably be deployed.

You'll see us developing that trust over the next two to three years. As you have heard many officers say, in times of crisis or conflict you can always surge forces, but you can't always surge trust. Right now, the trust that's required in terms of enabling and sustaining those forces will be essential, as we look to where we may be deployed as first responders in the future.

• (1215)

Mr. James Bezan: I haven't had a chance to look at request for proposals that went out today, but I'm looking forward to your comments. There were rumblings before the RFPs came out from some of the bidders. There were concerns about whether there was going to be a requirement for Canadian content, especially in the technology and the arms systems that are in place in the system. There were concerns as well that it requires tons of paperwork to answer all the questions that have been raised by the government, and that it's going to require truckloads to deliver all the papers to DND and public works, who want to know everything, including what types of fasteners and tools are going to be required to build the ships.

We heard at committee as well that some of the things naval experts are watching for is whether it is going to be a modular type of environment on these vessels and how quickly we can upgrade and switch out capabilities.

I'll just ask you, Admiral, what you're looking for and whether you have some of those similar concerns. Are you happy with how the request for proposal is being rolled out?

VAdm Ron Lloyd: As I indicated in my opening comments, I had the opportunity to visit a number of industries that will likely bid on this request for proposal. I was there to talk about what it is we're responsible for, which is the requirement. We have worked, as I indicated, at great length to ensure that a requirement is defensible. What we've said is that this is a performance that we require from our platform, so we're back to the threat. We have what we would consider a good understanding of the threat today, and we're extrapolating to what the threat could be tomorrow.

We're taking a look at what the performance requirements of that ship will need to be in order to ensure it is survivable. The test that our requirements must go through is a survivability lens to ensure that when we send our young men and women into harm's way, they have the tools at their disposal to be successful.

As I indicated, the characterization of our requirement was demanding but achievable. We're completely agnostic about the platform, and we repeatedly emphasized that at every stage to reinforce that if it meets the navy's requirements, then we'll be

comfortable with the ship that is ultimately selected at the end of this process.

If you're asking me if I'm comfortable that we will deliver the right ship, then I will say I'm comfortable that we have the processes in place to select a ship that meets our requirements.

The Chair: Mr. Robillard, you wanted to give some of your time to another member.

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Jean, do you want to finish up with your thought?

The Chair: The floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: That's just a mini-question; it's not my main one.

Is the timeline for the conversion of the container ship into a supply ship being complied with at the Davie shipyard?

[*English*]

VAdm Ron Lloyd: Is that for the overall percentage in dollar value?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: No.

[*English*]

I mean if the schedule is respected—

VAdm Ron Lloyd: Sorry. Could you just rephrase your question one more time?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Will the vessel be ready at the agreed time?

[*English*]

VAdm Ron Lloyd: As of yesterday, I was informed that we are ahead of the timeline anticipated for delivery of the *Asterix*.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Okay. Thank you.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

You know that the mandate of the Department of National Defence is being changed to place more emphasis on peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

In your "Leadmark 2050" policy, you talk about the purchase of peace support ships that would give the fleet greater capacity and flexibility for ground operations. If I understand correctly, the ship could potentially be convertible.

Is this still one of your plans? Do you think it would be useful?

Cmdre C.P. Donovan: That's a good question. Presently, there is no project or plan for such a vessel, because it depends on the direction the government wishes to take. If the government engages on a course that includes anticipated missions, we will then conclude that we require the capacities of a ship of that type.

We will work as part of the Department of National Defence to determine defence needs, not just for the navy, but for all forces. We must prepare options so the government can make a decision. For the moment, this kind of vessel is not at the planning stage.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Submarines were discussed at length. One witness told us last week that we are short of submarines, and he compared us to Australia. Specifically, we have only four submarines, even though we have three coastal zones to monitor and protect.

Do you think we should have more submarines.

Several studies appear to show that we are underequipped in terms of submarines, and that we should have at least two more, especially considering the uptick in operations in the Pacific, to which you referred earlier.

Cmdre C.P. Donovan: The decision regarding submarines is not mathematical alone. As the admiral often says, it's a team sport. Canada is so vast, and its coastlines so long, that we could never have enough submarines to assign them everywhere. Teamwork consists of monitoring, communications, command and control. The important thing is to do a good job identifying the places where threats can emerge. When such a place is identified, you have to determine whether you want to use a submarine, ships or aircraft, in the case of defence, or, other systems located in space. You also have to determine whether the Coast Guard, the RCMP or other organizations have responsibility in the situation.

The location of submarines is very difficult to detect. Even if they're just outside a harbour, and are not in the immediate vicinity of the threat, the threat is unaware of that fact. The submarine sends out a signal that encourages the threat to think twice or three times before doing anything hostile, because it cannot identify the submarine's location.

It's a set of systems, and that's how submarines are used.

Mr. Jean Rioux: In other words, you're satisfied with—
[English]

The Chair: Mr. Rioux, that's your time. Thanks very much.

Ms. Blaney, you have the floor.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

I'm going to go back to maintenance.

I'm just curious. What was the thought process around making sure that we aren't too dependent on private contractors?

VAdm Ron Lloyd: The thought process...?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: How are we going to ensure that we don't become too dependent on private contractors?

VAdm Ron Lloyd: We will consistently monitor it. As I indicated previously, we've seen other navies in the world increase their dependencies on industry and we've seen how that has worked, or not. I think the information we've seen thus far is that you need to ensure you fully understand the risks that accrue as a result of having full dependencies on industry. I think what you are seeing there is a recognition of the fact that we need to carefully weigh the pros and cons. As we go forward, we will be consistently monitoring and ensuring that the risks are able to be mitigated.

• (1225)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

The other thing I'm interested in, moving beyond maintenance, is that it looks like we are going to be building only two supply ships. I have a relative who actually works on the supply ship on the west coast. We used to have three. The reason was to have one for each side of the country, and then the third to fill in when one of those wasn't working.

If we have only two, how are we going to deal with that?

VAdm Ron Lloyd: The requirement is for three. Right now, the project is to deliver two, with an option for three. In terms of how we will mitigate the situation, we will continue to develop strategies, as we have, recognizing that we've had only two for quite some time now.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: The amount of creativity that goes into your work is greatly appreciated.

You were talking about diversity earlier. The last thing I'm really interested in is knowing your specific strategy around indigenous recruitment.

My family has helped you out. You have multiple folks in different levels of military from my family who are indigenous, but I'm curious about what the strategy is to attract them and keep them in.

CPO 1 Michel Vigneault: We have existing programs right now on both coasts, in Halifax and in Esquimalt, that run concurrently in the summertime. It usually starts in late spring. It's called the Raven program, and its main goal is to attract aboriginal recruits in the hope of keeping them in the long term.

From all accounts, it has been successful over the last few years. There's more work, obviously, and every year is more focused to get more numbers, but we're working in the right direction.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: How have you seen that impact the actual increase of indigenous people joining the navy?

CPO 1 Michel Vigneault: I would have to go anecdotally from the last time I was at sea, which was about four years ago, when I was coxswain of HMCS *Montréal*. We had a good number of aboriginal sailors on board my ship. We were fortunate enough to do a Great Lakes deployment, stopping in Toronto, Montreal, and Quebec City. I think that in itself helped when our sailors went ashore and interacted with Canadians.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

I have one last thing, and it just occurred to me to go back to maintenance one more time. In maintenance, we know that contractors have an investment in making money. That's part of their goal.

I'm curious. How are you going to make sure they are not keeping those vessels dockside and are getting it done quickly to get out to sea?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: Industry can bring scales of economy to bear. There are strengths in terms of what industry can provide in terms of the maintenance and repair of our ships. Once again, as I indicated, we will be understanding those risks, those challenges, in going forward, and then we will be making sure the solutions we implement take those risks into consideration.

I think you will see that in some respects industry will be motivated to deliver a win-win. For our MCDVs, maritime coastal defence vessels, all their maintenance right now is done by civilian industry, as an example. I'm thinking about a time when we haven't been able to meet schedule because of requirements.

That risk exists, I guess, but provided you have solutions in place to mitigate that.... In a warship, you need to make sure that in those combat systems and the like, you have that capability and capacity. There are other systems as well. Some of the secure systems you can think of need to be capable of being maintained by our maintenance facilities because otherwise, from our perspective, it would be unacceptable risk right now.

• (1230)

The Chair: Thank you.

That concludes the formal questioning. We have some time left, so I was going to start off with the Conservatives.

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

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

In your opening remarks, you mentioned that the submarine HMCS *Windsor* recently took part in an exercise in the Norwegian Sea. Upon its return from the exercise, NATO asked the submarine to return to the North Atlantic for an actual intervention.

Over the last two years, on how many occasions have our submarines or our vessels had to intervene in Canada's north to respond to threats by submarines or other foreign vessels that were in or close to our territorial waters?

[*English*]

Vadm Ron Lloyd: As we discussed previously with respect to security and the classification of those types of questions, we can take that on notice and get you the information.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I'd like to receive that information.

I have a second question.

I noticed in your document entitled "Leadmark 2050" that the constabulary role of the Royal Canadian Navy will be intensifying, and that you collaborate closely with the Canadian Coast Guard. I believe the Coast Guard's vessels also need revitalization.

Do you feel that the Canadian Coast Guard's vessels are sufficiently adapted to joint operations with Royal Canadian Navy ships?

[*English*]

Vadm Ron Lloyd: The Coast Guard and the RCN have been working very closely together over the last several years on interoperability.

Early next month, we're having Canadian Coast Guard and Royal Canadian Navy staff talks, just to make sure that we're actually enabling each other. Two weeks ago, there was a conference that the Naval Association of Canada put on. There was a question about the navy and what we were doing up there. The Coast Guard came back and said that we need to be two sides of a coin when we operate together in the Arctic. We're working very diligently with Commissioner Thomas and her team to ensure that those capabilities of safety and security are addressed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: That's excellent.

Let's talk about procurement strategy. The problem with naval equipment or aircraft is that substantial time elapses between the decision and the delivery. Moreover, changes of government often cause problems, because the new government cancels the contract, or chooses another type of vessel.

For example, if the government wants to take part in peacekeeping operations, it will order a boat for that. But a new government might arrive and say that it doesn't want one anymore, and that it won't work.

In your opinion as a member of the military, are there other Commonwealth or NATO countries where the navy operates ideally? If I'm not mistaken, Australia has procurement systems that ensure politics don't enter the equation. Do you have colleagues who are satisfied with the way their systems work?

[*English*]

Vadm Ron Lloyd: I was at the International Sea Power Symposium about three weeks ago in Newport, Rhode Island, where the Chief of Naval Operations for the United States has a number of chiefs of navy and chiefs of coast guard convene to discuss the future of the maritime environment and some of the emerging trends that we collectively need to be aware of. I would suggest that it's very difficult to compare and contrast any model based on the legislation of other countries. You might have a model in one country that works really well, but if you try to export it to another country, because of the different legislation, laws of competition, and this, that, or the next thing, it's completely unworkable.

I don't think it's useful trying to compare and contrast models unless you actually have the time to get down to crossing the *l*'s and dotting the *i*'s and realize that the devil's always in the details. Invariably, when you take a look at a solution that appears to meet your requirements and should be straightforward to implement, my experience in headquarters has been that every time you scratch that thin veneer of "easy", it becomes complex and hard in a hurry.

That's why I would suggest that it would be very difficult, and actually unfair, to look at another nation's model and ask why we're not doing that because it would work better for us in Canada. We never have those sophisticated conversations about whether or not it truly is implementable in Canada.

•(1235)

The Chair: I wrote down something you said that I thought was quite telling, and I really appreciated it. You said earlier that we had the furthest to go, but we were the first on station. I think that speaks to the military's flexibility in its time to respond. We bring a kinetic capability to the fight when we show up.

With regard to the RCAF, it's often underappreciated how much tactical leadership we bring to the fight. Everyone thinks we're small and we go out and do a small percentage of missions, but we lead a lot of missions. Does the RCN enjoy that type of latitude when you're part of a coalition? Are you called upon to take leadership roles tactically?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: Yes. It's a phenomenal question. We often are. We do lead internationally.

I've had the opportunity to be the deputy commander of RIMPAC, the world's largest maritime exercise. I've had the opportunity to be the maritime component commander for RIMPAC.

We were very fortunate to have Rear Admiral Scott Bishop as the deputy commander of the last RIMPAC. My deputy was the maritime component of the previous RIMPAC. Commodore Baines was just leading Exercise Cutlass Fury, the anti-submarine warfare exercise in the Atlantic. The year before, he was the leader of about 12 ships as part of Joint Warrior, one of the largest NATO maritime exercises in probably about the last 20 years.

There was the carrier strike group that was participating as part of the Rim of the Pacific exercise. Its anti-submarine warfare and surface warfare commander was Captain Jason Boyd.

You can't reinforce that point enough, that our ships have tremendous leaders, both operationally and tactically.

When I was speaking to Vice-Admiral Clive Johnstone in NATO, when when I was visiting him last week, he indicated that he's really appreciative of the ships we've deployed under his command. I think the term he used was that our commanding officers are "thoughtful" in terms of being able to deliver effects across a broad spectrum.

The final point I would add, in terms of that ability to lead and be interoperable, is that in my experience, whenever there's a frigate deployed within a coalition, if there's a hard job to do, it's typically given to the Canadian frigate.

The level of integration is tremendous, and one of the biggest compliments in a sort of reverse way is when, in a message, you'll see your ship mentioned as "USS" *Charlottetown*, which reinforces the fact that you've now been integrated or assimilated into that carrier strike group.

As I said in my change-of-command speech, if there's one thing I am absolutely, unequivocally sure of, it's the quality of our sailors. The foundation upon which the RCN is built is our sailors, and I refer to them as bedrock. If our sailors are not the best in the world, then they are amongst the best in the world. I have every confidence that any mission given to your navy, once given to the sailors, will be executed to the highest standards.

As I say to the leadership, "Get out of the road. They'll put that mission on their shoulders, and they'll get 'er done." We just need to

turn to making sure that we can then enable and sustain that commitment, and that's where we'll do the heavy lifting going forward.

•(1240)

The Chair: Thank you for that.

Mr. McKay, did you have a question?

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Retired Admiral Robertson came here a week or two ago. I was very impressed by his testimony. He basically described a long, slow, gentle decline of the navy's capabilities, and that after not such a long time, just falling off the cliff if something isn't done.

I don't know whether you read Gwynne Dyer at all. What I like about his writing is that it's to the point. One of his core points is that the next war will be short and sharp, and that whatever you have, that's it. You're not going to build anything new. That's whether it's jets or ships or whatever it is.

I'm looking at the Library of Parliament's "Royal Canadian Navy Fleet Strength". It comes up with 12 frigates. We have 12 operable frigates at this point, once HMCS *Toronto* leaves Halifax.

In terms of *Iroquois* class destroyers, it says there's one, but I thought that had been retired.

Do we still have a destroyer?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: Yes. She's not deployable. She's still able to be used for training activities. She'll be paid off at the beginning of next year.

Hon. John McKay: So basically, if we have a conflict, we have no destroyers.

In terms of the *Kingston* class maritime coastal vessels, the Library of Parliament says we have 12. That's on both sides, the Atlantic and the Pacific. Are they all operable, or are there some in maintenance?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: At any given time, we have have 10 of them that are available for service, and one per coast will be in maintenance.

Hon. John McKay: So if a conflict started, we'd have 10 to throw into it rather than 12.

Vadm Ron Lloyd: The maritime coastal defence vessels are basically constabulary, so in terms of combat capability, there wouldn't be any combat capability in those vessels.

Hon. John McKay: They're certainly not warships, then, as such.

Vadm Ron Lloyd: They're warships in the sense that they're armed. They're doing extraordinary work in terms of the war on drugs in the Caribbean as part of the Joint Interagency Task Force South, in terms of sovereignty, and in working with other government departments. They're playing an invaluable role in terms of the constabulary aspects of the Royal Canadian Navy's mandate.

Hon. John McKay: And—

The Chair: I'm going to have to give the floor to somebody else.

Hon. John McKay: I've hardly even worked my way through the fleet.

The Chair: We split time.

Ms. Blaney, you have the floor, if you have a question.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I'm good. He can ask a question, if he would like.

The Chair: Do you want to continue?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I'm so nice to you. Don't forget.

Hon. John McKay: In terms of the deployable subs, where are we at? Are we at two?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: HMCS *Windsor* on the east coast has just gone in for a battery change. HMCS *Chicoutimi* will be over this weld issue that we have, hopefully by the end of the year, and deployable next year. Once HMCS *Chicoutimi* is deployable, we'll turn our attention to HMCS *Victoria* in terms of addressing the weld issues that she currently has. Two will be deployable next year.

Hon. John McKay: Having two deployable is a pretty thin fleet, even in spite of today's announcement. Today's announcement means it's still five years or more in terms of ever seeing a ship that's actually floating and deployable.

For the next five years, really, we are in a fairly vulnerable status. We're going to possibly get a supply ship online by this time next year, hopefully, and who knows when the other two will come onside.

The Arctic offshore patrol vessels are just that, patrol vessels rather than war-fighting vessels, so at any given time, we have two subs and 12 frigates.

• (1245)

Vadm Ron Lloyd: And some of those frigates will be in maintenance.

Hon. John McKay: It's 10 frigates, then. Is that a fair characterization?

Vadm Ron Lloyd: Yes, that's probably a fair characterization.

Hon. John McKay: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: There's some time left, Ms. Blaney, if you'd like, or I can move on to Ms. Gallant.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: You can move on.

The Chair: Ms. Gallant, you have the floor.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: We know that the Danes, for example, are using modular ships as part of the NATO Smart Defence policy, and it's just like smartphones, having one device but having it do multiple functions.

Have we implemented the modular aspect into any of our current naval procurements?

Cmdre C.P. Donovan: We have not, and it's because we do our best, in terms of how we define the navy's requirement, not to prescribe a solution to industry. As much as possible, we have a performance requirement specifying that the ship must be capable of doing this, to this extent, and to this success level. If an industry bidder believes the solution to deliver that is something that involves modularity, then they can pitch that as their solution, and it competes against other solutions that deliver it some other way.

We do our best not to tell industry how to deliver our requirement. We just state the requirement.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The chairman mentioned at the outset of the meeting that he didn't see you on Navy Appreciation Day, but in that spirit, we are all thankful for what you do, and what the air force and the army do as well.

In that spirit, I'd like to move a motion that was adjourned by the government the other day. The motion reads:

That the Committee accept all recommendations in the two reports of the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman tabled in September 2016; that the Government implement all of these recommendations as the best way forward to support Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans, particularly those in transition; and that the Government respond to the Committee on this motion.

This is so moved.

I think we've heard lots of testimony and had a chance to talk about it in the past. I'm hoping, while we have our representatives of Her Majesty's Royal Canadian Navy here, that we could maybe pass that motion.

Mr. James Bezan: Just for clarification for committee members on the recommendations that are in from the two reports by the ombudsman, I'd like to read them.

There are four of them, from the two reports. The first three come from "Simplifying the Service Delivery Model for Medically Releasing Members of the Canadian Armed Forces". The recommendations are:

1. It is recommended that the Canadian Armed Forces retain medically releasing members until such time as all the benefits and services from the Canadian Armed Forces, Veterans Affairs Canada, and Service Income Security Insurance Plan have been confirmed and are put in place.

2. It is recommended that the Canadian Armed Forces establish a Concierge Service for all medically releasing members. This service would serve as a focal point to assist members and their families for all administrative matters regarding their transition....

3. It is recommended that the Canadian Armed Forces leads, through a phased approach, the development of a secure web portal. The portal would contain information for all Canadian Armed Forces, Veterans Affairs Canada, and Service Income Security Insurance Plan programs and services. The portal would also enable members to input their information just once, and the portal would automatically apply for all services and benefits that would be consistent with the member's needs.

The final recommendation comes from the Defence Ombudsman's report, "Determination of Attribution to Service: For medically releasing members". That recommendation is:

We recommend that the CAF determine whether an illness or injury is caused or aggravated by that member's military service and that the CAF's determination be presumed by VAC to be sufficient evidence to support an application for benefits.

The Chair: Mrs. Romanado, go ahead.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad we have a chance to debate this motion. At the last meeting, when it was presented, we had the ombudsman himself there, so we wanted to make sure we had an opportunity to get as much testimony as possible from the ombudsman on the great work that he and his team do. I'm glad that we have the chance to talk about it today.

From what I understand, this report has been submitted to the minister, and it is being looked at.

I would like to move an amendment to the motion. I'd like to read it out, if that would be possible. I know it's being handed out. I will read the suggested amendment to the motion:

That the Committee acknowledge the recommendations in the two reports of the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman tabled in September 2016; that the Government continue to work with the Ombudsman to build upon this foundation to find the best way forward to support our Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans, particularly those in transition.

● (1250)

Mr. James Bezan: Could you read that again?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: That the Committee acknowledge the recommendations in the two reports of the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman tabled in September 2016; that the Government continue to work with the Ombudsman to build upon this foundation to find the best way forward to support our Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans, particularly those in transition

Very much in the spirit of what you are suggesting, Madam Gallant, I agree with you that we need to make sure.

The Chair: The amendment is in order.

Mr. James Bezan: I think it significantly changes the intent, Mr. Chair. It doesn't require a response back from the government, which is in the original motion. It's not accepting; it's just making a recommendation. I think that it is out of order.

The Chair: With regard to the amendment, according to the advice of the clerk, it is in order. He is the expert here. We want to debate that amendment, and that's what we are going to do.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Your ruling on the point of order is that it is in order.

The Chair: Yes, according to the procedure, it is in order. Now there is debate on the amendment.

Where do you guys want to go with this amendment? If you are not happy with it, you're happy to make a point on that issue. That's where we are.

Go ahead.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The amendment replaces the whole motion. The intent of the motion was to accept the recommendations so that they can move forward as encouragement to the minister to accept these recommendations and start implementing them as soon as possible.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Vote against the amendment if you don't like it. He's already ruled that it's in order. If you want to challenge the chair, then challenge the chair.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: This is the debate portion, though.

The Chair: That's the last thing on the table, so if you don't like it and you're not in agreement with it, then we can solve that problem.

Mr. James Bezan: I'll just debate the amendment, then.

I do think this is more ambiguous than what we're putting out there in asking to make sure the recommendations are accepted. First, the committee accepts those recommendations, and we ask the government to implement those recommendations.

One thing I'm disappointed in is that you're removing the need to have the government report back to committee. I think it's one of our prerogatives, as committee members, to ask the government for feedback. You're removing that completely from this motion, so the amendment is, in my opinion, watering this down and not at all serving the interests of members who are transitioning right now and who are being medically released. I think this is a disservice to all those who serve in uniform.

● (1255)

The Chair: Just one second; Ms. Blaney wants to chime in here.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I want to support what was just said. The reality is that in changing the words the way we have, we're not putting enough pressure, I think, on moving something that's so very important. The men and women who serve this country deserve the respect shown by making sure that the next step for them, especially when they're released in such a sad way, is that they get what they deserve. Having those two levels not work together functionally is very unfortunate for everyday people.

This amendment lightens the responsibility. It doesn't follow through with the spirit of the intention here, which is to ask for us, as a committee, to accept the recommendations of the two reports and to make sure we're in a dialogue with this minister on moving forward.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms. Romanado is next.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you so much. I'm happy to respond to that.

As I mentioned, I understand that the ombudsman has submitted this report. As you all know, up until very recently, I sat on the veterans affairs committee as well. As the mother of two sons currently serving, no one takes that commitment to service to heart as much as a family member. Yes, I understand the question of the transition and those being medically released is being looked at by the veterans affairs committee in a study on service to veterans, and I believe that report will be tabled at some point. I know that it is a part, but I'd like to get to where I'm going and to the rationale regarding my amendment.

In the spirit of that is why I brought forward the amendment, and to say that we acknowledge the ombudsman's report. It was an incredibly powerful report. I know it has been submitted. I'm looking forward to seeing what the response is on it. It was in that spirit that I put forward the amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Bezan is next.

Mr. James Bezan: I'd like to move a subamendment that we would add onto the revised motion that the government respond to the committee on this motion.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Do you mean the last part?

Mr. James Bezan: Yes, that the last part be added in. I think it is imperative that we hear from the government on how they're going to handle the ombudsman's recommendations. There are only four of them. We heard quite well from the ombudsman, Mr. Walbourne, what needs to happen. I think all of us around this table agree with those recommendations of having a concierge service and of having one-stop shopping through a portal, as well as through the IPSCs. It is imperative that we support him rather than give a government an out from telling us what they're going to do to support our men and women in uniform.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Could I ask that you read out your suggestion?

The Chair: Procedurally, before we go to this, you can't add a subamendment to the amendment, according to the clerk. You can't expand it. She can withdraw it, and we can go back to the amendment.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to accept that friendly amendment on behalf of the member.

The Chair: We're going to work this out, but procedurally you have to withdraw your amendment and the subamendment, and then redo your amendment, and then we'll read it back. Does that make sense?

Your subamendment's dead. It's out of order. It doesn't work.

Mr. James Bezan: I don't know how you can get to that.

The Chair: The clerk can fill you in on that.

Mr. James Bezan: Can you explain that, please?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Philippe Grenier-Michaud): Basically, we have a main motion by Ms. Gallant. We have an amendment moved by Ms. Romanado to narrow the scope of the main motion. Mr. Bezan is trying to move a subamendment expanding the scope of the amendment.

Procedurally, the best way to proceed would be to withdraw Ms. Romanado's amendment with the unanimous consent of the committee, and to resubmit a new amendment, including Mr. Bezan's intent to make sure that the main motion can be amended with the agreement of the majority of the committee.

• (1300)

Mr. James Bezan: Let me just say this on amendments. I'm referring to chapter 20, page 1055 of O'Brien and Bosc. In the diagram there it says:

Proposed generally to improve the wording of a motion. (No notice required unless the committee decides otherwise; debatable and amendable.)

If you look at it, it's not changing the intent. The committee is the master of its own domain. If we can come to a friendly decision, you don't have to rule it out of order. It can be accepted, and we can continue on.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I have a point of order.

If there's unanimous consent of the committee to change the wording, there should be no reason why we can't just—

The Chair: Is there unanimous consent to change the wording of the amendment?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: To add that last sentence? Absolutely.

The Chair: Can I see a show of hands?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can I ask one question?

The Chair: Is it applicable to what we're doing?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Yes it is, thank you, Mr. Chair.

There's already a mechanism in place, and I'm just trying to get confirmation, where the minister has to report back on the recommendations from the ombudsman, correct? No?

Mr. James Bezan: It's only if the committee requests it.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Can we find out, then, if that's the case, because if he already has to report back on the recommendations, then what we would be doing would be redundant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: That's a delay tactic.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I'm not trying to delay anything, Cheryl, okay? I just want to know before I vote on something.

Is this redundant? Are they asking for something that he's already going to do anyway?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Then it would just have to come to the committee officially, right? If he has to do the report, this amendment will just mean that it officially has to come to the committee.

Mr. Darren Fisher: That's a fair point.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: We're going to read it again.

The Chair: First of all, formally, with unanimous consent, we're going to wind this thing backwards to the amendment, correct?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: The amendment that I put forward will now read:

That the Committee acknowledge the recommendations in the two reports of the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman tabled in September 2016; that the Government continue to work with the Ombudsman to build upon this foundation to find the best way forward to support our Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans, particularly those in transition; and that the Government respond to the Committee on this motion.

I understand Mr. Bezan would like me to add that last statement. Is that correct?

Mr. James Bezan: Correct.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: I'm happy with that.

The Chair: Is there any more discussion on that?

Mr. James Bezan: You mean on the main amendment, though.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Ms. Romanado mentioned that as a parent of a Canadian Forces... It very well could be that the children of serving members of Parliament, especially with government, would be able to have a seamless release from the military and then to Veterans Affairs, but the average everyday person who's being medically released from the military does not have that advantage.

What the ombudsman has done is set out a way that they won't have to be medically released for a service-related reason and then go to Veterans Affairs and fight for the coverage and the benefits to take care of the very reason they were released medically from the forces in the first place.

All we're doing, by being less forceful, is delaying this time and causing further pain and suffering for our serving members.

The Chair: I appreciate what you said, but I want to move forward with this, because we might have some agreement here. This is a two-step process. First we have the amendment, and then the motion.

Go ahead, Mr. Gerretsen

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I'm okay with the way we changed the amendment unanimously, but if this committee wants to study a particular issue about the transition to civilian life, then we should do that and make recommendations from that point. However, for us to just grab the ombudsman's report and then try to shove that down the pipeline through our committee without having studied it is, I think, quite honestly, being disingenuous to the quality of the report and the quality of attention that it deserves.

Everybody around this table feels passionately about this issue and believes in doing the right thing. It's just a matter of how we go about that and how we approach it. I'm happy that we've come to a conclusion on including Mr. Bezan's point in it and I'm happy to vote on it, but I will say that I'm reluctant when we start to go down this path because we're not giving it the service that it deserves, in terms of properly studying the issue before putting the stamp of this committee on it. When this committee puts its stamp of approval on something, I like to think that we've done the work to be able to fully and honestly provide that stamp.

Thank you.

• (1305)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chairman, I'm disappointed that Mr. Gerretsen has called into question the capabilities of the ombudsman's office and of the ombudsman himself, Gary Walbourne. He has not only served as the defence ombudsman but also as the deputy

ombudsman in Veterans Affairs Canada. I don't think there's any person in Canada who better understands the transition difficulties that members are experiencing. He is someone who has been on both sides of this fence and has been shepherding our veterans and our members of the Canadian Armed Forces through this process.

There are four very straightforward recommendations, and I would have hoped that when these were tabled back in September that all of us would have taken the time to look at the recommendations in those reports. It was very well done. I know that the ombudsman tried to meet with each and every one of us to further discuss his report. I know that many of us engaged him on that. We know full well what's in that report. We are as informed as we can be on these reports.

We know from the history of this committee that our agenda is quite full and that every time we try to add things to the agenda, they get kicked back down the road, so we never get around to it, in my opinion. This is nice, clean, and simple, so let's get this report looked at by the government and have it report back to this committee.

I'd just like to go back to Darren's question about government reports. Committees have to make that request, based on Standing Order 109, and it's also on page 1074 in the book. Then they have 120 days, if we request it. That's why it's important that we put this in the motion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, if I could just—

The Chair: Mr. Rioux was next on the list.

Go ahead, Jean.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: I think the subject we're addressing is important. I'm a member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. You are all no doubt aware that the committee will be tabling a report that analyses the transition. That's probably the starting point. As my colleague Mr. Gerretsen has noted, if that's the case, it will have to be examined more carefully. The report, once tabled by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, could be a starting point.

[English]

The Chair: You can go ahead now, Mr. Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Chair, I just want to make sure that I had the opportunity to put it on the record that in no way were my comments meant to impugn the motive or the great work of the ombudsman. My rationale for my remarks had more to do with the inner politics of this particular committee.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I know that Mr. Rioux is fairly new to Parliament and in an ideal world, it would work that way, Mr. Chair. However, from the outset, we've requested that the chief of the defence staff appear before this committee to be a witness and to supply briefings on the current deployments, so there is nothing secretive. If there were things that were sensitive, we'd agree to have them in camera.

We've also passed a motion on force protection. We're concerned about the recruitment centres and our land and naval bases and wings in terms of our personnel being properly protected. We still haven't had that study, so I'm concerned that, as Mr. Bezan said, the issue will just get kicked further down the road.

These are people's lives we're dealing with, people who are going to be medically released and will have no doctor, let alone a benefit plan in place to take care of any procedures or care that they're going to need.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Rioux.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: That's what the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs will do when they hold hearings. The matter has

not fallen by the wayside. Based on the testimony we heard, from the armed forces and Veterans Affairs Canada alike, the government is very much attuned to the problem, and wants to act soon.

● (1310)

[*English*]

The Chair: I felt I heard some consensus here, if we rewind a little bit back, so if it's okay with everyone, I'd like to put the question on the amendment as recommended by Ms. Romanado.

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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