

WEBVTT

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<v SPEAKER_2>Hello again, and welcome to another episode of Defence Deconstructed on The CGAI Podcast Network.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'm your host for today, Charlotte Duval-Lantoine, Vice President of Ottawa Operations at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

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<v SPEAKER_2>On today's show, I'm talking with Mario Baril, the DND CAF Ombudsman, about their latest report on Primary Reserves, Injuries, and Entitlement for Compensation, titled, Marking Time, a Decade of Stealth Progress in the Primary Reserves.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Enjoy the show.

00:00:39.020 --> 00:00:42.320

<v SPEAKER_2>Monsieur Baril, welcome to Defence Deconstructed.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Thank you so much.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Pleasure.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So you're joining us today because your office released on Tuesday, February 10th, a new report titled, Marking Time, a Decade of Stealth Progress for the Primary Reserves, where you're talking about specifically primary reserve access to health care and support that they get from the Canadian Armed Forces when they get injured.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But before we get to that, it is the first time we have you on the podcast and I wanted to give you a chance to introduce yourself and tell us what you were doing before joining the role as Ombudsman and maybe a little bit about your vision for your role in the years to come.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Absolutely, absolutely.

00:01:26.880 --> 00:01:46.060

<v SPEAKER_3>So it's a new, beautiful new challenge for me working as Ombudsman for DND and CAF, but in some ways a continuity of what I've been doing for the last seven, eight years because I was

organizational Ombudsman for two departments.

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<v SPEAKER_3>I started back in 2018, launched the very first Ombuds office that I said, Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada, and then pursued for another two years over at Public Services and Procurement Canada.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Although a bit different than the current role where an organizational Ombud is more about internal conflict and prevention in some ways, and providing mediation services, ensuring that the workplace is healthy, productive, and engaged.

00:02:23.740 --> 00:02:41.820

<v SPEAKER_3>In this case, it's more defined as, I'm sure we will speak about this, but more defined as part of a directive, and the mandate is more clearly defined in terms of providing advice and guidance and recommendations.

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<v SPEAKER_3>But just a little bit about me, I've spent 33 years and a half in the Federal Public Service, started as a communications advisor, media relations officer at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and then moved up the ranks to be a manager of media relations at PSPC during the Guamere Inquiry.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So I've always been sensitive about high level issues and sensitive issues and wanting to communicate clearly what is required to make this system better.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So a long career in strategic and business communications, which was then followed by being an advisor to deputy ministers as chief of staff at PSPC, Treasury Board Secretariat, the office of the chief human resource officer.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So you can see that I've always had interest about human related files, like not so much about, you know, although I would know about the HR policies, but it was, I've always had interests throughout my career about healthy and productive workplaces.

00:04:01.760 --> 00:04:14.520

<v SPEAKER_3>What is it that we can do to make the job more appealing to people, more comfortable, getting employees engaged, innovative, contributing.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And so I became an executive about 20 years ago, being chief of staff to these deputies.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And that exposed me in my career to providing advice to the most senior rank, speaking to the media, doing issues, management, and so on and so forth.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And eventually became ombudsman 7, 8 years ago.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So it's, I think I am an example of a non-linear career where, you know, opportunities came up.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I was capable of using my leadership skills to be able to provide that advice and guidance.

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<v SPEAKER_3>A very exciting career.

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<v SPEAKER_3>But back in, back as of July 2nd of last year, when I saw this opportunity, I thought, oh, that will be different.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Advising a minister rather than advising the bureaucracy might be a bit different in some ways.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And when I saw that, you know, the ombudsman position would be one of a special advisor to the minister, that was very appealing to me.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I'll explain to you why.

00:05:30.680 --> 00:05:35.540

<v SPEAKER_3>I think as ombudsman, we already want, we always want to see progress.

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<v SPEAKER_3>That's probably one of the things that is the most rewarding in our career, is that when we are in a state where things are not going well, we make a recommendation and then we see through with, you know, tangible results.

00:05:53.120 --> 00:05:54.860

<v SPEAKER_3>We feel good about it.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I thought advising a minister about such a complex environment as national defence and the Canadian Armed Forces would be probably very rewarding.

00:06:06.900 --> 00:06:15.700

<v SPEAKER_3>And so back in September, I had that opportunity to meet with the minister and the connection was fantastic.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So I thought this is all about, you know, building the proper relationship, making sure that there's trust and that we can see and track and monitor improvements.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So very long answer, but this is part of me and part of my passion for effectiveness.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I appreciate the long answer.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That was very much an opportunity for our audience to get to know you.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So that was fantastic and thank you for this extensive background.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So let's dive deeper into the report, your first report published since you became Ombudsman.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It was a fascinating read as someone that touches on personnel policy, but is not as acquainted as I would like to be on the reserves and especially the Primary Reserves.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And your report touches on access to health care for Primary Reservists who get injured while serving.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And before we get into the challenges that you've identified in the report, could you give us a quick overview of what the system should be functioning and what Primary Reservists are entitled to?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Something that you mentioned in your report, but also I know from experience for having people around me serving in the Reserves is that the support and compensation package that Reservists get is not very well known even from Primary Reservists themselves.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Yes, I appreciate this question.

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<v SPEAKER_3>If you allow me, I'd like to say also that as part of my introduction, and I missed that part, but I just want to say that this Ombudsman's Office was very welcoming to me.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I found that the people that have worked in the Ombudsman's Office have been there for a very long time.

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<v SPEAKER_3>They're passionate about what it is that they do.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I got like fantastic support right from the beginning.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Now, to answer your question, what I find, I'd like to first maybe state that, you know, the Reservists play a critical role in the Canadian Army.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Like, we see them probably more through the media when there's crisis across nationally, you know, the wildfires and the floods.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And it's amazing to see how fast they can be deployed and the level of, you know, their level of engagement.

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<v SPEAKER_3>I found, I did a couple visits already, not just a couple, like one in Trenton last night in a regiment in the hall.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I find these people to be, first of all, so dedicated, like they're passionate.

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<v SPEAKER_3>They do this because they want to do it.

00:09:18.060 --> 00:09:20.980

<v SPEAKER_3>Their heart is at the right place.

00:09:20.980 --> 00:09:29.060

<v SPEAKER_3>And I've even discovered last night that some of the reservists that are there are regular force members as well.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And they do this because they want to give to the next generation.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And that was kind of enlightening to me in the way that, you know, I thought, wow, these people, they believe in the mission.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And they want to be supportive of the reservists.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So all that to say in the background, I think, and more and more with what we see across the world, I think we need to really take good care of our reservists.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I'll be speaking a little bit about this later.

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<v SPEAKER_3>But to come back to your precise question, like what is it that needs to be fixed?

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<v SPEAKER_3>We wanted to do this report because we haven't seen progress on two of the reports we published about, you know, compensation as well as access to mental health.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And we made multiple recommendations years ago, almost 10 years ago, to have a system that would resonate and that would be accessible where the reservists would feel that the employer keeps their promises on how to take care of them if they ever get ill or injured, if they require compensation, and so on and so forth.

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<v SPEAKER_3>What is unfortunate is, while we think, from an ombudsperspective, that our recommendations were quite feasible, fast forward 10 years later, we haven't seen any progress.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So if you are ill and injured, and you're trying to get support and access, and you don't get it, or you get the wrong advice, and you end up piling up bills and, you know, it did create, I don't

know if you saw part of my report, but there was one case where an individual was owing like \$80,000, and was told that you need to pay back because, you know, you may not have been entitled to this amount of money for medical health support.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So as you can imagine, like as I mentioned, their heart is at the right place, they work hard, they're dedicated, but if something happens, then they don't feel they get the proper support.

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<v SPEAKER_3>It creates, it can create mental health issue, it can create disengagement, it can create situations where, you know, through their word of mouth, people will say, you know, are you sure you want to enroll?

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<v SPEAKER_3>Are you sure you want to be doing this?

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<v SPEAKER_3>Because if you do get injured, maybe you're not going to get the service that you're entitled to.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And so our report was to bring back all of these issues to the forefront and verify with CAF leadership whether or not they were still relevant.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And the answer, the short answer to this is yes, all of our recommendations 10 years ago are still relevant.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So the second part of our report was more about, okay, what were then the barriers to not being able to accomplish these results.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And so our focus has been on, you know, on this report about the barriers.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I think there's right now there's so much momentum that I think these barriers can be mitigated, eliminated, and we can move forward by January 20, 2027.

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<v SPEAKER_3>I want to see results for sure.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, it's been, the report has been a fascinating read, albeit quite a heartbreaking one, especially the two examples that you've given them, where I can only imagine what it's like to not only being injured and having both your employment and your status within the reserves being in question, but also owing so much money, almost as a surprise because someone might have their eligibility removed or deemed ineligible down the line.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think it's particularly important to not only talk about this in the context of those are people who are serving Canada on top of their employment, and that is something important to address, but also the Canadian Armed Forces is recognizing that those are, that reservists are an operational asset for the Canadian military.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We've been hearing since the fall that the Canadian military is looking to develop a strategic reserves of up to 400,000 Canadians, and so fixing those problems just to make sure that we can recruit and retain those service members, but also ensuring their well-being the best that we can is going to be quite critical.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You mentioned the challenges to the implementation of the recommendations made by your predecessor 10 years ago, but also the report mentioned some slow implementation of some recommendations made in 2008.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What has been the main challenges and barriers that you've seen in terms of following through on the recommendations that the department had agreed to implement?

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<v SPEAKER_3>No, this is a good question.

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<v SPEAKER_3>One of them is governance.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Lack of clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Our report defines that currently there's probably four, if not five senior leadership positions that have some accountabilities with regards to, you know, how do we use the reserve force?

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<v SPEAKER_3>What is the employment contract?

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<v SPEAKER_3>And there seems, from what we understood from some of our interviews, that there's even disagreement amongst top senior leaders of the CAF about, you know, how we should employ them and how we should use them in a proper way and so on and so forth.

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<v SPEAKER_3>But then there's, you know, the roles and responsibilities.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Like, there's a Chief of the Reserve.

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<v SPEAKER_3>There's the Vice Chief of Defence Staff that has accountability.

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<v SPEAKER_3>The Director of Casualty Management Services has accountability.

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<v SPEAKER_3>The base commanders have accountability.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So, when there's so many people that are involved in the development of policies or in the decision making, the final authority to decide whether or not an individual, a reservist would be entitled or not to a service, there's confusion and then there's wrong decisions that are made.

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<v SPEAKER_3>For which, I like to say that if the ombudsman did not exist, these people might not have satisfaction and fairness and equitable access and treatment.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And so, our recommendation on this governance is, on this governance is please clarify, make it simple, have just one individual responsible with the authority, the knowledge, the understanding of the policies to be the decision maker.

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<v SPEAKER_3>In that example that I provided to you about the \$80,000, it was a mistake where the base, at the base unit, they thought that they had the authority to make a decision on the access of health services.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So, and the documents were not processed in a timely fashion.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And by the time it reached, you know, the final decision authority, for which I believe it didn't even reach that final authority, our office said like, okay, we need to find the proper person to make that decision.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And once that was established, the individual felt so much relief because they knew that, you know, what has occurred for a full year, we lose time, people are stressed out, the bills keep coming, and then you don't have the proper governance to make the proper decision.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So governance is a key, key, key principle.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Another of the finding was the cultural divide.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And there's still studies that I was interested in, that I read about the perception of the regular forces, about the regular forces towards the reserve and vice versa.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And there seems to be still that cultural divide.

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<v SPEAKER_3>How do people feel about the reserve and vice versa?

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<v SPEAKER_3>And there's some examples that were provided in the report where even if a class reservist was to consult a medical officer, they found that there was a specific tag on their file just to identify them as a reservist.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And just that made them feel in a different way.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And of course, depending on the class of the reservist, the entitlements might not be the same, but still, in my mind, like, it's a question of the senior leadership, making it clear that wherever you work, whether you're a regular force or a reservist, you might be, as a reservist, you might be going, like, to high-stress environment.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So there should not be a different treatment, and that there should be, you know, they should be considered as valuable as anybody else.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So I often refer to this social contract where you have a promise that the employer will take care of you.

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<v SPEAKER_3>As a reservist, it's the same.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Like, you know, they should be taking care of you.

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<v SPEAKER_3>There shouldn't be that cultural divide.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And there's also the resourcing constraints over the years.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Like, have we properly funded the reviews of the policies, the processes?

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<v SPEAKER_3>Have we made sure that we invested the proper amount of either financial resources or human resources to tackle the issues that have been long-standing for sometimes even 16 years of reviews of the reservist policy is a very, very long time.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And then the last point I would say is modernization.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Like, we need to make sure that why do we, why are we so much paper processed?

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<v SPEAKER_3>And then these paper get lost in the way.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So the modernization would be about making sure that we have, you know, technological system where people don't have to search for the forms if they get injured.

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<v SPEAKER_3>They just go in, they have all of the resources, they

fill in their incident report, and then there's a tracking procedure.

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<v SPEAKER_3>We need to have the proper accountability so that things cannot get lost, and then the proper decision-making process within 30 days, like it shouldn't be months before you would be entitled.

00:22:11.100 --> 00:22:19.960

<v SPEAKER_3>If I compare, for example, to the public service, I mentioned to you that I worked as Chief of Staff at Oak Grove.

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<v SPEAKER_3>We always make sure that the policies are clear, the implementation is fair, equitable, and that there's a proper tracking system and accountability system.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And I think that's what's lacking in the Reserve Force.

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<v SPEAKER_3>So, resource modernization, governance, and no more cultural divide between the Reserve and the regular forces.

00:22:52.560 --> 00:22:58.520

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00:23:09.200 --> 00:23:13.080

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, on that last point that you just made about cultural divide.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Back in the fall, I attended an event where I heard someone refer comparing the Reserve to a rugby club.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I thought it was quite jarring to talk about people who are serving on top of doing their 40-hour job this way.

00:23:33.740 --> 00:23:45.320

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that cultural divide comes from decades of not having their strategic direction on how to use the Reserves.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And because of that, they're not being seen as the

operational Reservists, as not being the operational asset that they are.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Even though time and time again, especially with Operation Lantus, we've seen that they have been like valuable enhancement to what we will call the force in being or the regular force.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So it's interesting that all of that, all those problems that you point to, we've seen similar themes in the most recent Auditor General's report on recruitment and retention and housing.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So it's quite interesting to see the through lines and the fact that, as you mentioned in your report, but also in an interview that you did with Murray Brewster about the report, you mentioned that the time is now, the opportunity is here, especially that now money might not be as much of a constraint as it used to be.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So you spoke about all of those issues.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Can you speak a little bit more to your recommendations and how you view the CAF more head on addressing those issues?

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<v SPEAKER_2>And what would you suggest to prioritise?

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<v SPEAKER_2>You know, like, you're giving them 12 months.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It won't be, hopefully, it won't be just a sequential approach to that change.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But what do you expect in those 12 months to happen?

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<v SPEAKER_2>And how do you view the CAF to pursue that?

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<v SPEAKER_2>What is essentially going to be part of big change for them to make this happen and successful?

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<v SPEAKER_3>Thank you for this question.

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<v SPEAKER_3>I did have an opportunity to speak to the minister back in September.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And the minister shared with me that, you know, he was looking for the low-hanging fruit.

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<v SPEAKER_3>He wanted to see progress, like, fast.

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<v SPEAKER_3>And we were not specifically speaking about this report back then.

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<v SPEAKER_3>But I've always kept this in my mind, that, you know, if we are to achieve something quick, something fast, this would be one major, major win.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Because we're, you know, there's so many reports about the reconstitution of the armed forces and the modernization, making sure that, you know, we, there's operational readiness, retention, recruitment, all of these things.

00:26:19.200 --> 00:26:29.660

<v SPEAKER_3>And, and, and yet we are missing probably what I, I think as the most fundamental part is the conditions of work.

00:26:29.660 --> 00:26:44.140

<v SPEAKER_3>There's so many, so many media reports about, you know, buying new equipment and the fighter jet, the F-35 and the new bells and whistles, which are critical investments.

00:26:44.140 --> 00:26:46.400

<v SPEAKER_3>But then what about the people?

00:26:46.400 --> 00:26:54.240

<v SPEAKER_3>And that's where the ombuds is very, very much focused, the experience of the people on the ground.

00:26:54.240 --> 00:27:02.000

<v SPEAKER_3>And, and so when you say, how do I see my recommendations being implemented?

00:27:02.000 --> 00:27:12.020

<v SPEAKER_3>I think, I think it's good for the Canadian Armed Forces to see the future and the growth and, and, and being ambitious.

00:27:12.020 --> 00:27:22.620

<v SPEAKER_3>But I think accountability in terms of how you manage your people is as much important as being ambitious about the future.

00:27:22.620 --> 00:27:29.800

<v SPEAKER_3>And that's where I did refer with in my discussion with Murray Brewster about the fundamentals.

00:27:29.800 --> 00:27:32.540

<v SPEAKER_3>We need to get the fundamentals right.

00:27:32.540 --> 00:27:39.420

<v SPEAKER_3>And, and my advice and my recommendation is just go with the low-hanging fruit.

00:27:39.420 --> 00:27:43.620

<v SPEAKER_3>Clarifying the authority is a simple one.

00:27:43.620 --> 00:27:52.340

<v SPEAKER_3>Like there should be a leadership meeting in saying like, okay, there's confusion about who is the proper authority.

00:27:52.340 --> 00:28:02.240

<v SPEAKER_3>Let's define one individual and let's communicate who is that individual that will be the final, final decision maker.

00:28:03.300 --> 00:28:20.600

<v SPEAKER_3>If there's any issues with regards to a reservist being ill or injured or requiring medical help or reserve force compensation and all of the other initiatives and programs that were established to support them.

00:28:20.600 --> 00:28:22.940

<v SPEAKER_3>So for me, that's an easy one.

00:28:22.940 --> 00:28:27.480

<v SPEAKER_3>Like it shouldn't take a year to clarify who's accountable.

00:28:29.000 --> 00:28:39.920

<v SPEAKER_3>And then for the other part of it, when I discussed about, you know, having an online form, these days, like we see this all the time everywhere.

00:28:39.920 --> 00:28:44.280

<v SPEAKER_3>We go online, we fill out our form, and there's a tracking.

00:28:44.280 --> 00:28:47.580

<v SPEAKER_3>And again, it's a question of accountability.

00:28:47.600 --> 00:29:01.780

<v SPEAKER_3>Once you pushed on the button and your situation has been sent to the proper authority, you expect a timely response.

00:29:01.780 --> 00:29:07.500

<v SPEAKER_3>Same as to any civilian that would be doing a claim for their insurance.

00:29:07.500 --> 00:29:11.680

<v SPEAKER_3>They wouldn't be waiting for a year to get compensated.

00:29:11.680 --> 00:29:21.880

<v SPEAKER_3>If a civilian was to be injured in their work, they wouldn't want to be waiting for a year or for a couple of years before they get the proper services.

00:29:21.880 --> 00:29:26.460

<v SPEAKER_3>So for me, the modernization should not be too hard.

00:29:27.120 --> 00:29:28.820

<v SPEAKER_3>It's quite feasible.

00:29:30.540 --> 00:29:36.060

<v SPEAKER_3>And informing the people as well, like having a single window.

00:29:36.060 --> 00:29:37.840

<v SPEAKER_3>I'll give you an example.

00:29:37.840 --> 00:29:46.140

<v SPEAKER_3>Yesterday, I was in the regiment in the hall, and I was talking to about, I don't know, 60, 70 reservists.

00:29:46.140 --> 00:29:52.860

<v SPEAKER_3>And I asked them at the end, please share with me, because I am your voice to the minister.

00:29:52.860 --> 00:29:54.880

<v SPEAKER_3>Tell me what is your experience.

00:29:55.600 --> 00:30:02.720

<v SPEAKER_3>And one lady raised her hand, and she said, you know how we learned about our conditions of work?

00:30:02.720 --> 00:30:05.140

<v SPEAKER_3>It's through the word of mouth.

00:30:05.140 --> 00:30:13.820

<v SPEAKER_3>And, you know, we consulted our colleagues, and they say, if you encounter this problem, this is the form that you should fill out.

00:30:13.820 --> 00:30:20.700

<v SPEAKER_3>But often the word of mouth is not the authority about how to go about a problem.

00:30:21.260 --> 00:30:30.660

<v SPEAKER_3>So, I'm thinking about a single kind of web space where people could go in and see all of the resources.

00:30:30.660 --> 00:30:39.060

<v SPEAKER_3>You're probably familiar with the Military Benefits Browser that was established about 10, 12 years ago in our office.

00:30:39.060 --> 00:30:41.380

<v SPEAKER_3>It's such a success story.

00:30:41.380 --> 00:30:54.360

<v SPEAKER_3>So, what I've got in mind is the same type of thing where people would say, I'm injured, I'm a reservist, I'm a Class A, am I entitled to A, B, C and D?

00:30:54.360 --> 00:30:56.300

<v SPEAKER_3>Yes or no, right?

00:30:57.240 --> 00:31:00.900

<v SPEAKER_3>And then clarity in terms of the processings.

00:31:00.900 --> 00:31:02.220

<v SPEAKER_3>Like, what do I need to do?

00:31:02.220 --> 00:31:04.960

<v SPEAKER_3>Step one, step two and step three.

00:31:04.960 --> 00:31:14.320

<v SPEAKER_3>So, I don't know if it's me as ombudsman, but in my mind, I see these as very feasible in the very short term.

00:31:16.920 --> 00:31:54.640

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, and to go back to some points that we've made earlier in the conversations, like the moment is now, and hopefully with the fact that there are discussions around the strategic reserves and the fact that we're increasing defence spending, hopefully the organization has the momentum to pursue those reforms in a way that it might have been too constrained to do, let's say 10 years ago, even though that problem should have been fixed then, maybe the next moment is now.

00:31:56.180 --> 00:32:07.860

<v SPEAKER_2>Can you speak to the reaction from the leadership, whether it is from the minister's office or the people you interact with at the top of the Canadian Armed Forces?

00:32:08.460 --> 00:32:13.480

<v SPEAKER_2>What has been the reaction to your recommendations in your report?

00:32:13.480 --> 00:32:31.740

<v SPEAKER_3>So they've been very positive reactions, like the General Taringa was one of the interviewees as part of our follow-up report, and she was agreeing totally 100% with our report.

00:32:31.740 --> 00:32:45.240

<v SPEAKER_3>I must say, like 10 years ago, she was not the General, but seeing this now, she totally agrees with all of the recommendations, and she is very engaged in making sure that we fix them.

00:32:45.800 --> 00:32:50.580

<v SPEAKER_3>So, the report and the relationship is not confrontational.

00:32:50.580 --> 00:32:56.600

<v SPEAKER_3>They agree, they agree with our observations, they agree with our recommendations.

00:32:56.600 --> 00:32:58.300

<v SPEAKER_3>Same with the Minister.

00:32:58.300 --> 00:33:02.960

<v SPEAKER_3>The Minister agreed with all of the recommendations that we've made.

00:33:02.960 --> 00:33:07.820

<v SPEAKER_3>So, when you say there's momentum, I totally agree with you.

00:33:07.820 --> 00:33:09.940

<v SPEAKER_3>There's momentum, there's agreement.

00:33:11.020 --> 00:33:17.520

<v SPEAKER_3>Everyone sees the value and sees that right now is the right moment.

00:33:17.520 --> 00:33:27.000

<v SPEAKER_3>We cannot, in my mind, like, we cannot think of recruiting more if we don't fix these issues first.

00:33:27.000 --> 00:33:38.540

<v SPEAKER_3>So, senior leadership, you will see throughout the report, the quotes that comes from CAF senior leadership, and even them, they provide like concrete example.

00:33:39.440 --> 00:33:43.760

<v SPEAKER_3>And they're quoted in explaining like, this is not acceptable.

00:33:43.760 --> 00:33:46.180

<v SPEAKER_3>This is too much confusion.

00:33:46.180 --> 00:33:48.840

<v SPEAKER_3>We want to take care of our people.

00:33:50.100 --> 00:33:51.500

<v SPEAKER_3>And so on and so forth.

00:33:51.500 --> 00:33:57.080

<v SPEAKER_3>So, it's not like we are disagreeing on what needs to be done.

00:33:57.080 --> 00:34:14.940

<v SPEAKER_3>It's just finding like, doing the proper thing now, identifying the resources, having the tracking of it, and wanting to get back to the Ombudsman's Office even prior to January 2026 would be a dream for me.

00:34:16.160 --> 00:34:16.580

<v SPEAKER_2>I agree.

00:34:16.780 --> 00:34:21.380

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think that this is absolutely the value of your office.

00:34:23.260 --> 00:34:25.620

<v SPEAKER_2>Small plug for some of the work that I've done.

00:34:25.620 --> 00:34:37.100

<v SPEAKER_2>But back in 2022, I wrote about how your office is an asset to help the Canadian Armed Forces monitor progress on important personnel files.

00:34:37.800 --> 00:34:41.080

<v SPEAKER_2>And this report is yet another proof of it.

00:34:41.280 --> 00:34:49.280

<v SPEAKER_2>And the work that your office has been doing since 1998 is absolutely a proof of that.

00:34:50.700 --> 00:34:55.180

<v SPEAKER_2>So thank you for joining us on the podcast.

00:34:55.180 --> 00:35:10.520

<v SPEAKER_2>Before I ask you the last question, now that this report is out, what are your priorities for the next systemic investigation and what are you looking forward to work on for Canadian service members, whether they're regular force or reservists?

00:35:11.880 --> 00:35:25.080

<v SPEAKER_3>I love this question because I've spent the first three months thinking about the office and the priorities and what it is that we can do internally to make things better.

00:35:25.740 --> 00:35:46.060

<v SPEAKER_3>But in terms of the investigations and what it is that we want to achieve, right now, there's about 12 reports for which we have outstanding, still yet to measure as to how much of these recommendations have been applied.

00:35:46.060 --> 00:36:05.800

<v SPEAKER_3>So what we've decided is for next fiscal year and from now until next fiscal year and probably over next fiscal year, we'd be more to go along the lines of this report, finding the low-hanging fruit, being fast and efficient.

00:36:05.860 --> 00:36:12.960

<v SPEAKER_3>I must tell you, doing a systemic review report is a big undertaking.

00:36:12.960 --> 00:36:19.500

<v SPEAKER_3>It takes months, seven, eight, nine, ten months, sometimes over a year.

00:36:19.500 --> 00:36:31.020

<v SPEAKER_3>Given the fact that in my first interaction with the minister, he was looking for the early winds and the low-hanging fruit, we're going to change a little bit of the approach.

00:36:31.020 --> 00:36:45.340

<v SPEAKER_3>And we're going to look into, for example, when there's a transfer from one component to another of the Canadian Armed Forces, is it seamless?

00:36:45.340 --> 00:36:47.280

<v SPEAKER_3>Is it efficient?

00:36:47.280 --> 00:36:52.180

<v SPEAKER_3>We want to be sensitive to the realities of the CAF members.

00:36:52.180 --> 00:37:20.980

<v SPEAKER_3>If something happens in your life where you think, you know, I want to go from regular, and I want to be more in the reserve, maybe for a couple years due to family reasons, or I want to go to university and get a master's degree or PhD, or whatever is your family project, we want to make sure that this transfer from one component to another wouldn't be too complicated.

00:37:20.980 --> 00:37:26.660

<v SPEAKER_3>And from what I've heard up until now, it is not that seamless.

00:37:27.820 --> 00:37:29.580

<v SPEAKER_3>It's not that simple.

00:37:29.580 --> 00:37:32.460

<v SPEAKER_3>So this is going to be one of the area.

00:37:32.460 --> 00:37:45.060

<v SPEAKER_3>The other area is that we want to assess to what extent the complaint measures that exist within national defence are effective.

00:37:46.100 --> 00:37:50.380

<v SPEAKER_3>We want to make sure there's been reports of that in the past.

00:37:50.380 --> 00:38:03.540

<v SPEAKER_3>We want to make sure because of our role of fairness and equity, and we want to make sure that we see progress on that.

00:38:04.280 --> 00:38:12.720

<v SPEAKER_3>And from the collection of data that I've seen recently, there seems to be progress on that too.

00:38:12.720 --> 00:38:18.340

<v SPEAKER_3>But all that to say, anything can come up at any time.

00:38:18.340 --> 00:38:36.860

<v SPEAKER_3>Even the DOD, the directives that manage my office includes, even the minister could have interest for a specific investigation and can call my office and saying, like, I would like, you know, your office to review X, Y and Z.

00:38:36.860 --> 00:38:41.180

<v SPEAKER_3>This could always be a possibility as well.

00:38:41.180 --> 00:38:58.440

<v SPEAKER_3>But even if we're kind of putting the systemic big

investigations a bit on the back burner, we still have a lot of individual investigations that are ongoing, like, every single day.

00:38:58.440 --> 00:39:12.520

<v SPEAKER_3>Just to give you a sense, this fiscal year, we think that we're going to reach over 3,000 cases of people reaching out to us for advice, guidance, investigations and so on.

00:39:12.520 --> 00:39:16.420

<v SPEAKER_3>So there's no lack of work.

00:39:16.420 --> 00:39:17.960

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, du plan sur la planche.

00:39:19.460 --> 00:39:20.640

<v SPEAKER_2>So thank you very much.

00:39:20.940 --> 00:39:33.340

<v SPEAKER_2>And the last question that I will ask you, when you're not doing all of those investigations and trying to figure out progress for Canada's service member, what are you reading?

00:39:33.340 --> 00:39:36.380

<v SPEAKER_3>Oh, I love these questions.

00:39:37.120 --> 00:39:43.120

<v SPEAKER_3>I'm moving from Getsnow to Ottawa to be closer to the office.

00:39:43.120 --> 00:39:53.220

<v SPEAKER_3>And in my shelves, I found just last week a book that I wanted to read again from the various sections.

00:39:53.220 --> 00:39:57.620

<v SPEAKER_3>And it's Dare to Lead from Brené Brown.

00:39:57.620 --> 00:40:01.000

<v SPEAKER_3>I find that leadership is so important.

00:40:01.640 --> 00:40:13.200

<v SPEAKER_3>And in my last job, I was also responsible to provide executive leadership coaching to senior executives at PSPC.

00:40:13.200 --> 00:40:25.560

<v SPEAKER_3>And I think DND also requires that, you know, that coaching and that vision and that the characteristics that will make it move along.

00:40:25.560 --> 00:40:32.400

<v SPEAKER_3>Like, it is a good department with great leadership, but

there's always areas that we can improve.

00:40:32.400 --> 00:40:40.680

<v SPEAKER_3>And this book is just like amazing in terms of its content and its advice and its guidance.

00:40:40.680 --> 00:40:56.300

<v SPEAKER_3>So if I ever get this phone call from whomever, not so long ago, I was invited at the team, sorry, the Toastmasters, and I delivered a speech about leadership capabilities.

00:40:56.300 --> 00:41:05.040

<v SPEAKER_3>And whenever I read these books, it just refreshes my memory about the good stuff that we should be doing, the good leadership skills.

00:41:06.280 --> 00:41:07.000

<v SPEAKER_2>Excellent.

00:41:07.000 --> 00:41:08.380

<v SPEAKER_2>Well, Mr.

00:41:08.380 --> 00:41:17.440

<v SPEAKER_2>Baril, thank you very much for coming on Defence Deconstructed, and I hope we'll get you on the podcast sometime soon.

00:41:17.440 --> 00:41:22.320

<v SPEAKER_3>I really appreciate your invitation, and it's a pleasure for me.

00:41:22.380 --> 00:41:23.900

<v SPEAKER_2>Likewise.

00:41:23.900 --> 00:41:26.100

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for listening to Defence Deconstructed.

00:41:26.100 --> 00:41:31.580

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00:41:31.580 --> 00:41:38.160

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00:41:38.160 --> 00:41:40.760

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00:41:40.760 --> 00:41:44.420

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