

Adjournment Debate

● (1840)

HAITI

I realize the Minister of National Defence intends to take action, and I commend him for it. However, I would appreciate it if he would tell the House how he intends to rid his organization of the social poison of sexual harassment in the workplace. I would also ask the minister whether the main victims of harassment, his female employees, have been or will be asked to participate in the evaluation of measures taken to deal with a problem that concerns them directly.

[English]

Mr. Fred Mifflin (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence and Minister of Veterans Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for giving me the opportunity to address this important issue and to respond to her question once again.

On June 20, I tabled in this House on behalf of the Minister of National Defence a series of documents describing the measures taken by the Department of National Defence to address the issue of harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Changes have been made to ensure that DND's commitment to eliminating harassment is reflected in our programs and policy. Minor changes to the Canadian forces administrative orders that include the concept of zero tolerance are embedded in this policy.

The goal of the policy is simply the elimination and prevention of harassment. Every member has the right to work in an environment that is harassment free and to have any complaint of harassment dealt with in an expeditious, impartial and sensitive manner without fear of retaliation, and that is very important to add.

Our goal is to prevent and eliminate harassment in the workplace and this will be achieved by this policy and by educating and training members on harassment issues, policies and procedures.

Specifically, the new policies include revised complaint reporting procedures, the designation of harassment advisers, a DND harassment co-ordination office, a monitoring system to track the incidence of harassment and a comprehensive education and training program.

Harassment education and training for all members at the unit and base level is mandatory. The new policy is in the process of being printed and will be published in the upcoming months.

Once again I thank the member for allowing me the opportunity to stress the fact that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces remain committed to the implementation of a zero tolerance policy on harassment.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I am here today simply because so many Canadians are asking the same question and are demanding an answer, not an answer that we can come up with in the months to come, but an answer that we need right now because the decisions are being made right now.

For Canada to think that we have the resources or the ability to be the 911 emergency for the world, we are far beyond that.

The minister would agree that there are many hot spots in this world, that there are many that can explode tonight, tomorrow, next week, next month, and we have to establish some criteria that we are going to follow when we make foreign affairs decisions, particularly in the area of peacekeeping.

We need to look at things like the economic implications, the humanitarian reasons. They are good reasons but then every single place would have these same reasons. We have to come up with a set of fixed criteria. We have to look at the geographical relationship. The people who are closest should be the ones who can help the best.

We have the OAS which should definitely have been more involved in the Haiti situation. The African states should have been more involved in Rwanda. We have to look at the effect on international stability. We have to look at the media relationships—should we always be driven by CNN and Newsworld? We have to ask those questions.

Canadian people want to know what it is going to cost. How much is this going to cost? How much money are we going to budget to handle all of these emergencies? Again, that all comes into criteria.

We have to look at the resources that we have and of course we have to ask ourselves what our commitments are. We look at the whole military situation and see an awful lot of generals but we are certainly running out of front line troops. We are expecting our men and women in the forces to do so many things and they are not able to be stretched any further.

We hear talk about the equipment not being adequate. We get letters from parents who have lost a loved one because they felt our ability to deliver was inadequate.

We have to ask, what are these resources? How far will they go? We have to have a plan. We cannot just trust politicians that say: "We will send them and we will let you know what we hope to accomplish after". We must know, we must ask questions. If my son or daughter was going I would want to know why they were going, what they are going to accomplish and how it is going to help Canada. For how long are they going?

The closest thing I have seen on how long we are going to be Haiti was when RCMP Chief Superintendent Pouliot said yesterday on "Canada AM" that we are going to be there for seven to ten years to train the police forces.