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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Chair: Ms. Marilyn Gladu





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• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** Good morning. Welcome to meeting number 21 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

We are meeting in a hybrid format with the usual rules. In order to make sure we have an orderly meeting, I would ask that all comments be directed through the chair.

When you're speaking, please speak slowly and clearly so that our interpreters can hear.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(4), the committee is meeting today to consider a request received by the clerk and submitted by four members of the committee to discuss their request to undertake a study of allegations of sexual misconduct.

I will begin by asking Ms. Mathysen to read the entire text of the motion.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to say, before I read it, that I really appreciate that we have come together and that we're taking the time. This issue is of grave and growing concern. I know that this is a constituency week, but I truly appreciate the work that will be undertaken by this committee to look at this issue through the very specific gendered lens that the status of women committee provides.

I move:

That the motions adopted by the Committee on Thursday March 11, 2021 concerning a study of sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces be rescinded and replaced with the following:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces, including a review of Operation HONOUR; that the evidence and documentation received by the committee during the First Session of the 42nd Parliament in the report titled "A Force for Change: Creating a Culture of Equality for Women in the Canadian Armed Forces" be taken into consideration by the committee in the current session; that the committee invite the following witnesses before the committee with a one-hour panel dedicated to the Minister of Defence; a one-hour panel dedicated to the Acting Chief of the Defence Staff and Lieutenant-General Frances Allen, Canada's Military Representative to the NATO Military Committee in Brussels, Belgium; a one-hour panel dedicated to the Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman and the Commander of the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service; a one-hour panel dedicated to retired Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps; and invite the following witnesses, It's Just 700; Dawn McIlmoyle-Knott; retired Master Corporal Stéphanie Raymond; Lieutenant-Colonel Eleanor Taylor; that the committee dedicate four consecutive meetings to this study; and that the study begins the next scheduled sitting of the committee on Tuesday, March 23, 2021.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** I'll hear discussion on the motion.

Ms. Vandenberg.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** First of all, it's really nice to be back at the status of women committee. Early in my parliamentary career I was a member of this committee, and Ms. Gladu was the chair at the time. This committee does a lot of very good work, so I commend the members for taking this on. It is a very important and timely study. As you know, I'm also on the defence committee, and we also are in the middle of a study on this.

The one caution I would have in terms of naming witnesses outright—other than, for instance, the minister, since I think we can certainly name the minister—would be that on the defence committee there was someone the Liberal members had considered putting forward, and we found out that her mother had just died. If you put that name in public and then she has to explain publicly why she is not coming to committee.... I think we have to be very careful, certainly when we have the names of individuals. I know that the Liberal members have given me indication that they would like to add names. I understand that the committee may have a process regarding when the names are to be submitted for this study.

I would just venture that if possible—and we did the same thing in the defence committee—we could say that the minister should be invited, and then the other names could be submitted directly to the chair, since we know that the chair will make every effort possible to invite all the witnesses that all members submit. I would just propose that after it says "a panel dedicated to the Minister of Defence", we just skip down to where it says "four consecutive meetings to this study".

I think that traditionally this is how it's been done. Certainly, Madam Chair, I would imagine that these witnesses would be invited, just not individually named.

• (1105)

**The Chair:** Ms. Sidhu.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wanted to reiterate my support for this important study. That is why we passed the motion at the last meeting, Madam Chair. I was very surprised by this new motion. I thought we had an agreement to submit our witness lists for March 19. Wasn't that the motion we passed? We have been preparing a list of witnesses who we were hoping to hear from, and this new motion does not contain anything about inviting additional witnesses. This is a very important study. We all agreed to that on the last motion. We want to hear from women and their perspectives. It will not be a good study if we limit our witnesses. All parties should be included.

I have a few procedural questions.

First, I would like to make sure that a copy of the motion is distributed in both official languages to the members. It was brought in French.

Second, I would like to ensure that the other motion we already passed, requesting that the government respond to the 2019 report, "A Force for Change", remain in place, and that the feedback we hear from the government be taken into account.

Would you or the clerk be able to tell us what you think should be a next step for the study we already passed? If we call witnesses for Monday, will the clerk have enough time to get them headsets to make sure they are properly prepared?

I would ask you or the clerk if you can tell us what the next step is for the motion we've already passed.

**The Chair:** To clarify, this current motion that was read moves to rescind that motion that was already passed, so it would go away if this one is voted in.

With respect to getting it in both official languages, I will ask the clerk to comment on that.

To answer your question on the incorporation of the report, that is yes.

As to whether or not the clerk has enough time, Clerk, do you want to give a few comments on that?

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Stephanie Bond):** The letter including the motion was distributed last week. However, I notice a slight change in a title and the addition of one witness, so I defer to the committee on whether they would like that circulated now.

**The Chair:** Yes, please.

Also, on Monday, we are tabling in the House the report you mentioned, so that will happen.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, do we not need unanimous consent to rescind the existing motion?

**The Chair:** No. According to the rules of the House, a committee may reopen discussion on an earlier decision if its intent is to revoke it. If the original resolution is in fact rescinded or discharged, the way is then clear for the committee to make a second decision on the same question. They have given me the page numbers in our big, thick, green book of procedure: pages 590-591 and 1064. No, that's the motion. I'm sorry. A motion to rescind is a debatable substantive motion requiring the appropriate notice, and needs only a majority vote to be adopted.

We'll go next to Ms. Shanahan.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** I am sorry to interrupt you, Madam Chair. The sound level of the translation is the same as yours, so it is extremely difficult for me to follow the conversation.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Could we have the interpreters fix that? She is hearing both English and French at the same level.

Is it better now?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** No, it is not better. The sound level of the translation is still the same as yours.

**The Clerk:** Is your microphone muted?

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Yes, it is muted, Madam Clerk. The translation and the person speaking are at the same sound level, which makes it very difficult for me to follow the conversation.

Usually, the translation is louder than the sound of the person speaking, so we can understand what is being said. Right now, both sounds are at the same level.

**The Clerk:** Ms. Larouche, do you see the "interpretation" icon at the bottom of your screen?

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Yes. I am on the French channel.

**The Clerk:** Do you see the "mute original audio" or "sourdine" icons? Do you see the "English" and "French" icons and a third button?

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** I just unmuted it because I wasn't hearing anything anymore.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Let's suspend for a moment while we address the technical difficulty.

• (1110)

(Pause)

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Could the clerk answer the question of whether the witnesses can be called with that amount of time?

**The Clerk:** Yes. We certainly will try our best.

**The Chair:** Was that you, Ms. Sidhu, again, on the point of order, or was it Mrs. Shanahan?

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** It was Ms. Sidhu.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Madam Chair, I just wanted clarity if Madame Larouche understood what we said when we started the committee. Everyone is saying that it is not good if she's not listening to the French. Should we start again with what we said, because she needs to know what other members are saying?

**The Chair:** Madame Larouche, do you need the group to repeat what they have previously said?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** No, that won't be necessary.

I was waiting for the clerk's answer. However, I did not quite catch it.

[English]

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we go to Mrs. Shanahan.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm very happy to be back here today. I was at the last meeting, which was in camera. We had some good conversations and we voted on a motion.

Before us now is essentially the same motion, but with a prescriptive and very defined list. However, I have noticed that the motion contains some errors. I am not an expert on the titles used in the Canadian Forces, but I'm noticing some errors.

This is understandable because it is difficult to make a list without the help of the clerk and the analysts. They work very hard to find the appropriate witnesses and the appropriate people to appear before the committee. My understanding is that everyone wants to conduct an in-depth study with a feminist and survivor-centred perspective. I think that is what is missing from the discussions elsewhere. Survivors have not had a voice until now. There is a reason why Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor left the military. We know that this is an extremely serious issue. Now is the time to change the culture in any organization. I know that some people here have had these experiences in large organizations. Things don't happen overnight.

I don't think it's a good idea to ask people to testify publicly in a study like this. I don't understand why we would agree to be the vehicle that puts people in the spotlight when it should be their choice. Isn't that the principle behind any study or investigation of sensitive issues?

As everyone knows, we conducted a public study on MindGeek and Pornhub. In that study by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, I heard things that I had never heard before and that I didn't even think were possible. We were very sensitive with the invitations. For House committees, the usual practice is to invite people to testify. Some people want to contribute to the discussion. However, when it comes to a topic like this, they should have the choice of whether to testify publicly or not.

The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics gave witnesses the choice of testifying publicly, with or without counsel, or in camera. In the end, the meeting was held in

public. We had good discussions. Before the meeting, we received training on how to ask our questions. I think it went well and was very well received. Some changes can be made based on those appearances. That's why we're here, right? We are here to look at the problem, to identify the factors and to make recommendations. I think it has to be survivor-centred.

• (1115)

In my opinion, this is the contribution our committee can make. We can do something really important. So we must not limit our list. Research must be done, and some people will want to testify.

Ms. Mathysen was very clear that the study must focus on the feminist perspective.

It's important to walk the talk, don't you agree, Ms. Larouche?

• (1120)

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** That's right, it's important to walk the talk.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** There you go.

I'm looking forward to hearing what Ms. Larouche has to say on this matter. We have a lot of discussions on this topic in Quebec, and it is very important to our constituents.

We cannot appear to be targeting individuals or ordinary Canadians. We will hear some very personal things. As Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor said in a news report, she was part of the problem. So there's a lot to get out and we have to do so in a very thoughtful way, in order to make recommendations, which I know are very much needed. Now that the Canadian Armed Forces are changing, it is time to make the changes concrete. This is what will lead to a change in culture. That's all I have to say.

Madam Chair, as I said, I am very pleased to be here with you today.

**The Chair:** Ms. Larouche, it's your turn.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I've been thinking a lot about the last meeting of the committee.

During the debate, we wondered whether the committee would invite witnesses to appear and whether it would invite others. I was present at the last committee meeting, but had to be replaced by my colleague Mario Simard. The committee members voted on motions, and in the end, passed the motion that no witnesses be heard. I have consulted with my colleagues on the Standing Committee on National Defence. They are closely following what is happening. Clearly, the goal is not to duplicate or repeat their study. However, I sincerely believe that the feminist perspective is essential and crucial to this study. This is the mission of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. This is an important issue, since there seems to be a problem within the Canadian Armed Forces.

However, we must also look at this from the perspective of equality. It's not just about women. Members of the LGBTQ+ community and men can also be victims of sexual touching. We cannot deny that. The study will help women, men, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and everyone else feel safe in the Canadian Armed Forces. We are taking a feminist approach to our study, since we are the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I also looked at the list of witnesses and there are some very important people on it. I then compared it to the list of witnesses who will appear before the Standing Committee on National Defence. The names are not the same. The Standing Committee on National Defence will hear testimony from the following people: Zita Astravas, Elder Marques, Michael Wernick, Janine Sherman and Bernard Boland. Those names are not included in the motion before us today.

We are not replicating that meeting or targeting people. The purpose is for the Standing Committee on National Defence and the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to conduct a study that will provide the broadest possible overview of the issue. The Standing Committee on National Defence may be looking at the operations of the department, while we may be looking at the feminist culture and why women are still too often victims of this type of assault in the Canadian Forces. Hearing from witnesses whose testimony complements the others will give us a comprehensive view of the problem. I am therefore inviting us to receive the witnesses.

However, I would like to know whether these are the only witnesses we will hear from. Could we consider having an additional meeting to hear from other groups? Should there be an additional meeting?

I encourage the committee to think about that, rather than to take names off the list. If we start from scratch, we will be missing key aspects of our study.

That is how I personally feel, and I invite my colleagues to express their views.

• (1125)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Very good.

Next is Ms. Alleslev.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, CPC):** Thank you very much.

Thank you to all of our colleagues for taking this topic so incredibly seriously.

We have all been overwhelmed by the extent to which we see that perhaps the efforts to address sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces have not been successful. This is something the military has been working on for almost 30 years, yet if we look at the things that have been brought forward in the media, we can understand that whatever it is, it has not worked in the way that we need it to work.

Parliamentarians have a critical role in ensuring that our institutions, our structures and the things we value work the way they're supposed to. The military is a critical element of our defence and security. The armed forces protect and defend our Canadian values, but they must also embody them. As parliamentarians, we need to understand why perhaps they are not, to the extent that we expect.

This study essentially has been 30 years in the making. What has been done over the last 30 years has clearly not achieved the standards, goals and values that we expect of our military and that we expect of our citizens.

This motion today is obviously critically important. There are two elements.

First, we're talking about the "who". Those we want as witnesses, as we've outlined in this motion, are, with the exception of, I think, only two, all current serving members in the Canadian Forces. As members of the serving Canadian Forces, in the normal course of their duties, they have a responsibility to come and to educate, inform and report to a House of Commons committee and members of Parliament. I don't think there's any argument that doesn't support naming them in the motion and having them come forward.

Another part of the "who" is that at no time when I read this motion did I believe that it was intended to be an exclusive list of witnesses. Therefore, this sets out some very critical key people who need to come and be witnesses because of the role, responsibility and perspective that they bring, but this is not, as I understand it, an exclusive list. Certainly, on the national defence committee, we had motions to outline certain witnesses that needed to come forward, but over time we added to that list, and that very well may be a possibility that we need to pursue in such an important study.

The second element is the “how”. It clearly outlines in this motion that we need one witness on their own for a period of an hour because of the magnitude of what we need to hear from them and the topic that we need to address with them. This motion says who are the critical people that we need to start with—and it's well with-in their job description roles and responsibilities to appear, for the most part—and, second, we need them to come on their own for an hour because of the breadth and depth of what we need to discuss with them.

I think this motion is a critical starting point in terms of where we need this discussion to go. Then, afterwards, we will more than likely need to have other witnesses so that we can do justice to something that is so serious a topic.

I know we've discussed briefly the point that the national defence committee is also studying this. I would say to the Bloc's point that they are two very different studies.

● (1130)

On one hand we have women not able to equally serve beside men and a culture that is not embodying Canadian values. On the other there are individuals who have breached that trust at the highest level, and processes that have allowed that to happen, as well as the processes and structure that need to be in place, going forward, to change that culture. They are two very separate and distinct things.

We have a responsibility, as outlined in this motion, to review Operation Honour and the culture of equality for women, and why the processes and structures, essentially for 30 years, have attempted to do this and have not been successful. We need to do something different, but we need to understand what those processes were over that time, why they didn't work and what the missing elements are.

That's not what the defence committee is doing. This is a problem or a topic that is highly complex, has been going on for many years and has many aspects. The national defence committee, rightly, is looking at one of those aspects, and we need to be able to look at another aspect. That's why I believe this motion is so important.

To leverage what Anita clearly said, this is a moment in time at which we must say to men and women who choose to serve our country in uniform, as well as to all Canadians, that this is not who we are. This is not the type of behaviour we accept and this is the moment at which we must do things differently. Many men and women in uniform have reached out to me and said, “We are counting on you parliamentarians to be the difference and to show that this time it will be different.”

Again, thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak, and thank you to my colleagues for dealing with this serious motion today in such an honourable way.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Alleslev, and thanks to you for your service.

Now we will move to Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I don't think I could outline the need for this study as well as Ms. Alleslev just has. She did so very eloquently and very well, and I agree with those points.

The one thing I want to mention in addition to what has already been mentioned is that once we get through this list of witnesses, we should look at what we have heard from the witnesses. If we feel there are pieces missing, that there are holes, then we should fix those and fill them. That's what we've done in other studies we've completed or are currently undertaking, such as the one on unpaid work and the one on the impact of COVID on rural women, and that's what we'll continue to do.

The committee is the master of its own destiny. It can choose to do that, but I think it's very important that we move ahead and that we pass this motion to move onward. Then, once we've heard this, we can continue the conversation.

I would also like to mention that a lot of the testimony and that gendered aspect is the reason we've put into the motion the consideration of the past study taken on by the status of women committee, which was “A Force for Change: Creating a Culture of Equality for Women in the Canadian Armed Forces”. We've heard a lot of those voices already. That is a key part of this motion, so that we take what we heard in 2019 and use that to inform this study, this continuation, because yes, it is in the media. As Ms. Alleslev said, we're not dealing with this properly. That study was so important. Those voices cannot be lost, so building from that is important. Moving forward today, it certainly is. Once we can get through that, if we see holes, we absolutely have the ability to fill them, but let's move on and get this motion passed.

Thank you.

● (1135)

**The Chair:** Very good.

I would agree that I've heard from all the parties, and they seem to be willing to have additional witnesses, and it is up to the will of the committee whether it decides to do that.

Let's go to Ms. Vandenberg.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Thank you very much.

I agree with everything that has been said about the tremendous importance of this particular committee putting a feminist lens here. That is something the committee did in the 2019 study. Building on that to get real recommendations so we really can change the culture of toxic masculinity and the culture that exists within the Canadian Armed Forces....

Also, this committee could do much to amplify the voices of women. The women in the Canadian Armed Forces, the advocates and the veterans know what needs to be done. I would very much encourage this committee to make sure those voices are heard in this study.

I noted that Ms. Alleslev said that most of the people on this list are currently serving. There are a number of names on this list of people who are not. In fact, it looks like there are some survivors on this list. I would just reiterate that we have to be very careful if we put the name of somebody there. We have names we'd like to add, but we're reluctant to do so today because, again, then that person is on the spot. If they don't come, they have to explain publicly why they didn't come, because it was made public that they were invited.

There are a couple of other things with some of the names. I noticed that Ms. Mathysen corrected some of the titles in the verbal portion, but I would want to make sure that the actual motion that passes has everybody's precise title, just to make sure we don't end up with confusion about who is being invited.

I would like to propose an amendment. I would like to put an amendment to the motion. I can send this to the clerk also, but I'll just explain the rationale for it. I think that bringing the minister... I agree, one hundred per cent. We've seen that this minister has come to committee every time he has been called. He went twice to the defence committee and, in fact, he's going to Canada-China on Thursday, so he very much looks forward to engaging with his fellow parliamentarians. Certainly, having the minister there is a good thing.

Then, on the acting chief of the defence staff, I think we need to make sure again that the title is correct and that we're talking about Lieutenant-General Wayne Eyre. On the other person, I note that General Allen is not yet the vice-chief. Her current title is "military representative of Canada to NATO", so I think that would need to be noted if the committee wishes to invite her. I think that's legitimate, since she will be the incoming vice-chief, but the title should be accurate.

Then, in looking at some of the others, there is the Canadian Forces national investigation service. Right now, they are the ones conducting the investigations. I would really be careful about having the people conducting the investigations coming to this committee. They in fact report to the provost marshal. The provost marshal could come to talk about what the processes are and what it is that the investigative service does. However, I would suggest that instead of saying "the Canadian Forces national investigation service", we actually specify that we would have the Canadian Forces provost marshal, Simon Trudeau, come to the committee. That would be a particular name that we would add.

Certainly, retired Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps had a lot of very good things to say before the defence committee. I note that she wasn't getting the kinds of questions that she should have gotten, so I think there could be a lot more that she could contribute. Certainly, the 2015 report was phenomenally important in terms of the actions that we have taken as a government and the actions that need to continue to be taken. I think that's a legitimate person to have.

It's Just 700 doesn't specify a name of a person. I know that recently there was a turnover in the very courageous women who have run that peer support type of organization, so I would just recommend that it say "a representative of It's Just 700". I know that Marie-Claude Gagnon, who has done phenomenal work, has just

stepped aside and Christine Wood has taken her place. They should be able to decide between them who would be better placed or if there's somebody else who can speak on behalf of that organization.

The rest of them are individuals, and I would suggest that we not include the names of individuals, both because I know that there are other individuals members would like to invite and, more importantly, because we really don't want to put them on the spot.

• (1140)

I think the chair will make every effort to invite any individual private citizen who is put forward.

I noted earlier that the committee speculated that if somebody doesn't feel comfortable testifying publicly... I know that when I was on this committee and we talked about violence against young women and girls, having testimony in camera was always an option for people who may not have felt comfortable in public. However, by the same token, I think it would be very damaging and a bad precedent to have individual private citizens named publicly in a motion, and then have them have to explain later to the media or to others why they did or didn't accept that invitation.

I would propose to take those names out, and then for "that the committee dedicate", you could say "minimum four consecutive" or just "four consecutive meetings". The rest of it, I think, is okay.

I have that in French and English. I could submit that to the clerk, since it's a bit... You don't all have to scribble to try to get those names. I will submit that.

I also would strongly encourage the members of this committee to use this forum and this opportunity to give voice to women. We are at a moment of real change. I want people 10 years from now to look back on this really difficult time. We know people are coming forward with stories, sometimes from many years ago, and it is extremely triggering. It's extremely hard and requires courage for people to come forward, but the fact that they're coming forward now means we can look back on this as the real catalyst. We can say, "This was when things really started to change." This committee has a tremendous role to play in making sure that happens.

I will submit that amendment to the clerk right now.

**The Chair:** Could you read it out as well?

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** All right.

I have "That, pursuant to Standing Order 108", etc., and that goes right to the part where it says, "following witnesses". That part has not changed.

It would be as follows:

that the committee invite the following witnesses before the committee with a one-hour panel dedicated to the Minister of Defence; a one-hour panel dedicated to the Acting Chief of the Defence Staff, Lt.-Gen. Wayne Eyre, and Lt.-Gen. Frances Allen, military representative of Canada to NATO; a one-hour panel dedicated to the Canadian Forces provost marshal, Simon Trudeau; a one-hour panel dedicated to retired Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps; and invite a representative from It's Just 700; and that the committee dedicate a minimum of four consecutive meetings to this study; and that the study begins the next scheduled sitting of the committee on Tuesday, March 23, 2021.

**The Chair:** Very good.

We will go to Ms. Dhillon.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

Thank you to all our colleagues for speaking about this very important issue.

[*Translation*]

I would like to begin by saying that I agree with my colleagues Mrs. Shanahan and Ms. Larouche.

They did a very good job of explaining that we need to look at things from a feminist perspective, because we are on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. If we want to conduct this study, it is very important to give survivors the choice to appear before the committee. These survivors never had a choice when they were sexually harassed or assaulted in the past. It is never a choice.

For once, they can be empowered to come and talk. Women are increasingly coming out of the shadows to speak openly. It may take five years, two years, or even 30 or 40 years. That means that they are living with this trauma every day. We need to think about that. The purpose of our committee is to give women the opportunity to come forward. It's an open space where they can come and talk and feel safe.

As Mrs. Shanahan and Ms. Larouche said, if we are going to do this study, it is important to do so from a feminist perspective. It's not an investigation. Our committee's role is not to conduct investigations. Our role really is to empower women. We talked about toxic masculinity. This culture exists and there is no denying it. Every time we see it, it's disheartening. Sometimes it shocks me. It shocks everyone.

Furthermore, as my colleague Ms. Vandenberg said, we should not mention the names of the people and we should give these women the choice to come and testify, because if we force them to do so, it is intimidating for them. We can't push survivors to come and testify. We have to send them an invitation, give them a choice. We have to welcome them with open arms and be there for them. That is our role as members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Of course, investigations are important, but we must give them the chance to speak, for once in their lives, in order to learn what happened and hear their experiences. They then may feel that a weight has been lifted off their shoulders after speaking out. It's a way to alleviate their trauma, if ever so slightly. It is crucial that we proceed in this way as a committee. Some things are reported in the media and the opposition members want to do a lot of things. We have roles to play, as parliamentarians, as government or as opposition members.

As Ms. Alleslev said, this culture has been around for 30 years and we've been trying to change it, and not much has changed. It might be a good idea to listen to the survivors to see what they think. It's important to do so in order to change things. We have been trying to change things in the Canadian Armed Forces for

30 years and nothing is changing. Maybe we should listen to the survivors.

Ms. Mathysen said something very interesting at our last study. She said that the effects of the pandemic on women were studied by listening to their own stories. So I think it's important to hear their ideas to make things better. If nothing has worked in the last 30 years, we should hear their ideas about what can be done to make the changes work to protect survivors.

I see today that we are all women, but Mr. Serré is still here and we need men like him with us. We agree that the role of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is to ensure that victims and survivors who come before us feel welcome, protected and safe. They need to feel that we are able to listen to them and that we can make these recommendations to Parliament as quickly as possible in order to implement the desired changes.

We can all work together to achieve this goal.

● (1150)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Very good.

Just to be clear, we are discussing the amendment by Ms. Vandenberg.

Next on the list is Madame Larouche.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'd like a clarification on the amendment, because we don't have it in front of us in both languages and I am trying to keep up. So, the Liberals' amendment is to add Simon Trudeau's name to the motion and to remove the names of Dawn McIlmoyle-Knott and Stéphanie Raymond. Are those the changes that the proposed amendment seeks to make?

In that case, we would still invite the minister, the chief of the defence staff, Frances Allen and the ombudsman. We would also remove the reference to the Canadian Forces national investigation service. I am trying to get a solid grasp of what these changes might mean. I'm thinking of the names that were in the original motion. With respect to Ms. Deschamps, I spoke with my colleague on the Standing Committee on National Defence, and she was the only witness that we had both invited. As I mentioned earlier, this is proof that we can conduct studies at both committees without any duplication. Having spoken with my colleague who is studying this issue with the Standing Committee on National Defence, I believe that Ms. Deschamps would have something to say to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. As Ms. Alleslev said earlier, she will bring another perspective to our committee. So, I have no problem with that.

In addition, we're talking about the importance of finding solutions to this toxic masculinity in the military and listening to survivors. This past Sunday, Noémi Mercier appeared on *Tout le monde en parle*. She is a Quebec journalist who wrote a piece in *L'actualité* in 2015 about an investigation from 2014. She had spoken to Stéphanie Raymond, among others. She took issue with the fact that it seems nothing has changed and that today, in 2021, we're still discussing the same problems she brought up in her 2015 article. She said how important this issue is and spoke of Ms. Raymond's struggle and courage.

So, regarding the names included in the motion, I would like to hear from the analysts, because, at the last meeting, they said that it is not unusual to name people in a motion. I am just trying to clarify that, because we seem to be saying that it could be detrimental. On other committees, it's common practice to name people. So I would like to hear what the analyst has to say about it.

In my view, it's important that we listen to survivors like Ms. Raymond and others who have testified about the problems in the military. After hearing from the witnesses named in the motion, we will be able to see if we need to add another day of study and invite other witnesses to talk about certain subjects that have not been addressed. In fact, I have one that I would like them to address.

As I mentioned, and as Ms. Mathysen said, we have done this for other studies, including the study on rural women and the unpaid work study.

I want to make sure that the committee is approaching this issue from the right angle in order to properly understand it. So, if we add a day of study, perhaps we should invite people who have looked at the sensitive and psychological aspects of this specifically feminist issue. I fully agree with my Liberal colleagues that we may need to invite other witnesses to talk about issues not addressed by those named in the motion. However, we need to hear from those witnesses first. Then we will need to keep an open mind.

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes, and in response to your questions, we can name people in motions. That is normally done.

The changes that are proposed—correct me if I'm wrong, Ms. Vandenberg—are to correct the title for General Allen as the military aide to NATO, to add Simon Trudeau, to add Marie Deschamps, to take away the national investigation services, to modify the language around “It's Just 700” to say that it's a representative, to not include the names of survivors and to suggest a minimum of four consecutive meetings.

Did I get it right, Ms. Vandenberg?

• (1155)

[Translation]

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** I can read the amendment in French, if you prefer.

**The Chair:** Yes, that's a good idea.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** I sent the amendment to the clerk.

Did you receive it, Madam Clerk?

[English]

**The Clerk:** Yes. It has been distributed.

**The Chair:** The clerk is sending it to the interpreter post-haste.

If you could send it to Madame Larouche, I think that would help also. Thanks so much.

You might as well read it again in French, Anita.

[Translation]

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Okay.

The beginning of the motion would remain the same, but it would end like this:

... devant le comité avec un panel d'une heure dédié au ministre de la Défense nationale; une table ronde d'une heure consacrée au chef d'état-major par intérim de la défense, le Lgén Wayne Eyre, et à la Lgén Frances Allen, représentante militaire du Canada auprès de l'OTAN; un panel d'une heure dédié au grand prévôt des Forces canadiennes, Simon Trudeau...

[English]

That's because he is the person to whom the investigation service reports. That's a replacement for that one.

[Translation]

I forgot to include the ombudsman's name, Gregory Lick. It should be added to the amendment, Madam Clerk.

I will continue reading the amendment:

... un panel d'une heure dédié à la juge de la Cour suprême à la retraite Marie Deschamps; et inviter un représentant de It's Just 700...

I then removed all the survivors' names, because I truly believe they should choose whether or not their names are released.

[English]

It's not because we don't want to put in individuals. It's because they are survivors, or advocates of survivors, and I really believe it is very important that we not put them in a position in which they would publicly have to say yes or no. That's a lot of pressure when we're dealing with this subject matter. That's why I took those names out. All of them are the same except the survivors at the end.

I have replaced the national investigation service with the provost marshal, because he is the person they report to. He is in a better position and wouldn't have to talk about the actual investigation and perhaps cause a problem with the investigation.

Those are the only changes I've made.

**The Chair:** On a procedural point, there is not an ability, once an amendment has been moved, for the originator to amend the amendment. They have to either seek the consent of the committee to withdraw the original one and propose a new one, or...

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Do I have the consent of the committee to do that?

I see a “no”. Okay.

I will go with my original amendment as it was written, but if another member wants to add the ombudsman back later on, I would be quite amenable to that.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** On a point of order, Madam Chair, I would like to note that when I read out the motion, I put Lieutenant-General Frances Allen's current role in there correctly, so that doesn't need to be changed by any potential amendment.

**The Chair:** That's a good clarification.

The other thing that's missing in the amendment, if I could point it out, is the minimum of four consecutive meetings. It is always the will of the committee that we do it. If we decide to add more meetings after the fact, it's always okay to do that.

Next on the list I have Ms. Alleslev.

• (1200)

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would like to speak to the replacing of the CFNIS with the provost marshal. The argument that was made by my honourable colleagues is that they wouldn't want to have to speak about ongoing investigations. These are professionals. They are experts in their field. They know from years of experience exactly what they can say and what they can't and what would compromise an investigation and what would not, and I think it is unfair of this committee to prejudge a senior officer in that regard, that he would be somehow compromised by coming to our committee.

We need to understand at a very tactical level the process, the rank structure and the way in which investigations are conducted—the way in which they are made aware of investigations, as well as all of the process and structure around investigations—but certainly not any of the details around any of the specific investigations. I have a high level of confidence that being the expert he is, he would be perfectly in a position to do that.

Replacing him with the provost marshal is not only unnecessary but also would not give us the information to the degree that we need to have that information, particularly in light of the *Fifth Estate* investigative report that came out recently about the challenges in terms of process that some of the investigators in the CFNIS are facing when investigating these kinds of allegations.

That is my proposal or comment on the replacing aspect.

With respect to the victims, we are doing them a significant injustice by not naming them. Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor, retired master corporal Raymond and Dawn McIlmoyle-Knott have all been incredibly courageous by communicating in public about the challenges they have faced. I have every level of confidence that were the clerk of the committee to invite them, if they didn't feel comfortable coming to our committee, they would be more than capable of declining our invitation.

Therefore, to put their names in this document does not in any way compromise them, their safety, or their security. It doesn't put them in any kind of difficult position. They have already chosen to show how incredibly strong and courageous they are by coming forward. We are simply saying that should they want to come, we want to outline that we would like to have them.

In the case of Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor, she still is a currently serving member of the Canadian Forces and she has been very public. I believe that putting her name in this motion would ensure that

we can send a message to her just how important her testimony is and how what she has to say and why she is doing so at this point are of such great value.

I am concerned about not having the ombudsman in there, so we need to make sure the ombudsman is in there. We also need to ensure that the committee is dedicating the four consecutive meetings to this study.

In terms of the original motion, I can't see that any of the arguments for why we should be changing it hold water, so it is my perspective that the current motion, as given to us by Ms. Mathysen of the NDP, is exactly the motion we need to start this study.

Again, I thank her for the discussion and I thank Ms. Mathysen for putting this very important and well thought-out motion forward.

Thank you.

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Ms. Sidhu is next.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I fully support Ms. Vandenberg's amendment.

Ms. Larouche raised an excellent point about the testimony from the survivors, our respect for the pain the survivors have already endured and how women who come forward publicly about sexual assaults are treated. I want to suggest that some witnesses be given the option of presenting in camera.

We have a real opportunity to discover the tools that do and do not work and to make a strong and timely recommendation to the government. It is not fair to force the survivors to do this in public. We want to hear from survivors, but they need to know that their privacy will be protected. We are calling them so that we can learn from their experiences.

Finally Madam Chair, I would like to suggest a subamendment for clarification after the witness list as it stands. I would like to add that each party may submit further witnesses to be invited. It is fair for everyone.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The subamendment, then, is that each party will submit further witnesses. We can discuss the subamendment.

I have Ms. Zahid.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to everyone.

This is a very important topic. As members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, it is really very important that we make sure this study is focused on the survivors: on hearing from the survivors, empowering the survivors and allowing them a comfortable platform where they can come and share their experiences.

I totally agree with the amendment that has been proposed by my colleague Ms. Vandenbeld about not naming survivors in the motion, because that might prevent.... There might be some survivors who would not like to come. It is not necessary that if a survivor comes out and talks about something on one platform, they come and talk about that on all the platforms. I think it is really very important that we hear from the survivors but not include them in the main motion. All the parties should have the opportunity to submit the list of the witnesses they would like to hear from, and those should be in camera meetings so that they are comfortable sharing and coming out.

Our role is to empower more and more women so that they can come and talk about their experiences. It's not to be a barrier to someone coming out on this.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Did you have a comment, Ms. Sidhu?

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** I have just two points, Madam Chair.

First, we can say that each party "may" submit further witnesses. I said "will" but it's "each party may submit further witnesses". That's where I wanted to make a point.

I have one more point, and that is to also allow survivors to choose to testify in camera. It should be their choice.

**The Chair:** Ms. Shanahan.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I also want to come back to the question of inviting survivors and the importance of them choosing whether or not they want to appear before the committee. As we have seen elsewhere, when someone says something to a reporter or blows a whistle, as was the case with Pornhub, it does not necessarily mean that they are willing to make a public statement or be called to testify. Being named is not the same as being called to testify with a motion. I feel the subamendment is to ensure that we can invite other witnesses, because we will have some. You're going to see that some individuals will want to appear before the committee or submit a brief.

I also want to come back to the very good point that Ms. Larouche made with respect to the LGBTQ+ community. That community has experienced even more discrimination, prejudice and abuse, especially in the Canadian Armed Forces. Just think of all the cases we have heard about. I feel it's important to emphasize that. My concern with the original motion is, what will the focus of our study be? In my opinion, we really need to make the survivors our focal point and provide a safe space for them to come forward and talk about their experiences in a setting that is right for them.

Furthermore, our committee has no mandate to conduct investigations into specific cases. That is precisely why those investigations are being conducted by others. The people who do the investigations are very well trained. I don't know what more we can get from someone who is going to have to tell the committee that they can't comment on this or that. However, if we invite the provost marshal overseeing the investigations, we can get all the details that

Ms. Alleslev and other members want about protocol and how the investigations are being handled.

So I support the subamendment, which I feel is a friendly one. Ms. Vandenbeld already supports it. I certainly support both amendments, which will help us really focus the motion on the survivors.

• (1210)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Thank you.

I just have a quick note. Of course, the committee can do as it chooses. If witnesses need to appear in camera they can ask to do so. I know our committee and the clerk will certainly let us know. We will respect that.

I'm not really sure why this needs to be a subamendment, other than the fact that it could potentially be a delay. I would hate to think the other members are doing that. I would say the subamendment is unnecessary and that we should move on.

**The Chair:** Just to clarify, the subamendment would allow each party to submit further witnesses. The discussion about the privacy of individuals and holding the meeting in camera happened after that. It's the same as with an amendment. You can't amend a subamendment after you've made it, unless you have unanimous consent to withdraw.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** I think all these points have been made, right, that the committee is the master of its own...?

**The Chair:** Yes, and it's in our Standing Orders that the committee may do in camera meetings to protect an individual's privacy.

Ms. Vandenbeld.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** I don't think there was any intention for this subamendment to become the subject of lots of debate. I'm pretty sure we could probably just vote on it. I mean, it was more that we wanted to be sure that the witnesses many Liberal members have and would not be comfortable putting forward publicly would still be able to get called as witnesses. It's really just further clarity.

I don't think there's any harm in this subamendment. I would imagine that we could probably deal with the subamendment quickly and get back to my amendment, if possible.

• (1215)

**The Chair:** One would hope so.

Madame Larouche.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I am trying to keep up with the conversation. With the amendment, we are trying to put forward another list and add a subamendment to call more witnesses; that is how I understand it.

I also understand from Mrs. Mathysen's original motion that we can start with the witnesses listed. Then we can look at the gaps and what was not addressed by the witnesses. We have done that in other studies.

I feel that this is a very important study. The goal is to be as thorough as possible and to stay alert to what has not been addressed. To do that, we drew up a list of key witnesses at the outset to help us shed light on this issue. We need to ensure that no more women leave the military out of fear. That was on the news yesterday. It is important.

If I am wrong, the chair or the analysts can correct me. Today, we are debating the original motion as introduced, but anyone, including myself or the Liberals, is free to move for an extra day or two to hear from witnesses, so we can look into what was not covered. Is that correct?

[English]

**The Chair:** Yes. It is always part of the will of the committee if members choose to add additional witnesses. I believe Ms. Sidhu has moved this for additional clarity, so that it's captured in our motion, although it is always at the will of the committee.

Ms. Dhillon.

[Translation]

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would like to reiterate that it's really important that victims and survivors have the opportunity to testify before the committee. I don't understand the urgency of having people in high-ranking positions testify, rather than using that time to hear from the survivors, the victims.

Another committee is already doing that. As I said before, it is not our job as members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to conduct an investigation. That really bothers me.

I'm listening to my colleagues with great interest and respect. I feel it is crucial to invite all the survivors and victims who want to testify. They need to feel free, for once, to talk about their experience, about what they went through. They need to feel comfortable doing it.

Sometimes toxic masculinity doesn't only affect women; men can be victims of it as well. The culture within the Canadian military is such that people in positions of power, people who sexually assault or harass someone, do it to control that person.

[English]

You know, abusing somebody is more about control than it is about sexual enjoyment or pleasure. I know I'm getting off topic a bit, but what I'm trying to say is that it's very important that we look at this question in such a way that we empower the survivors, the victims, and we will empower them by giving them the choice to come in and speak if they want to or not.

[Translation]

I will repeat my question: why do we need people in high-ranking positions to testify before the committee? Other committees are going to call them. Our committee's role is to listen to the survivors, the victims.

My dear colleagues, in our study of the effects of the pandemic on women, we had women leaders of organizations come and testify about victims and survivors. We had the opportunity to hear them, and they got the chance to speak and be heard.

Personally, I do not understand why we are not focusing more on inviting survivors instead of high-ranking people to speak on behalf of these women. I would really like the committee to hear from the survivors, the victims. I feel it's important to approach the issue in that way.

Thank you very much.

● (1220)

[English]

**The Chair:** Now we are voting on the subamendment that each party may submit further witnesses.

Clerk, could you take the vote?

**The Clerk:** The result is five yeas and five nays.

**The Chair:** I also vote nay because it's something the committee can do at any time.

(Subamendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

We return, then, to the discussion on the amendment.

Could I have the amendment read?

**The Clerk:** Thank you.

The amendment is as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee undertake a study of sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces, including a review of Operation HONOUR; that the evidence and documentation received by the committee during the First Session of the 42nd Parliament in the report titled "A Force for Change: Creating a Culture of Equality for Women in the Canadian Armed Forces" be taken into consideration by the committee in the current session; that the committee invite the following witnesses before the committee with a one-hour panel dedicated to the Minister of Defence; a one-hour panel dedicated to the Acting Chief of the Defence Staff, Lt.-Gen. Wayne Eyre, and Lt.-Gen. Frances Allen, military representative of Canada to NATO; a one-hour panel dedicated to the Canadian Forces provost marshal, Simon Trudeau; a one-hour panel dedicated to retired Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps; and invite a representative from It's Just 700; and that the committee dedicate a minimum of four consecutive meetings to this study; and that the study begins the next scheduled sitting of the committee on Tuesday, March 23, 2021.

● (1225)

**The Chair:** We can now vote on the amendment.

**The Clerk:** The result is yeas 5, nays 5.

**The Chair:** Then I vote nay as well. The amendment is defeated.

(Amendment negated: nays 6; yeas 5)

Now we return to the discussion on the original motion.

Ms. Vandenbeld.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Given that neither the subamendment to add more witnesses nor the amendment passed, there are some names I would like to add to the witness list and to the motion.

I would be amending the motion to add the following names: Rear-Admiral Rebecca Patterson, Brigadier-General Lise Bourgon, Brigadier-General Andrew Atherton, Dr. Denise Preston, Professor Maya Eichler, Professor Al English, Professor Al Okros, Major-General Jennie Carignan and Julie Lalonde.

Like last time, I have this in French and English, which I will immediately send to the clerk.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** I very much appreciate that you are delivering your motions in both official languages and that we can see them.

Is there any discussion on that amendment?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Madam Chair, can we have the motion emailed to us, like the previous motion?

I am trying to figure out how we could have it sent to the interpreters as well. If it can be emailed to us, can the interpreters receive it too?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes. I think this is a very good practice.

Clerk, can I ask that when you receive that email, you send it to the members so they can take a look at what has been proposed and the names on that list? Then we will continue our discussion on it.

I have Ms. Alleslev. We're debating the new amendment on a list of names Ms. Vandenbeld would like to add.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Madam Chair, the witnesses Ms. Vandenbeld has suggested would probably add to our discussion. However, we first need to hear from the witnesses who are critical, whom we've outlined in this motion. That way, we can determine what additional information we need after that.

We need to get going. We need to start somewhere. We need to hear from these critical people in the time frame we've specified. We've also specified a minimum of four meetings. With that additional, comprehensive list of witnesses, I'm not sure we could do that in four meetings. Essentially, we're now trying to capture our entire study in one motion. That's just too much for what we need right at this moment.

The motion Ms. Mathysen has put forward is excellent. It's very clear. It's very specific about the key people we need to hear from, for where we need to start on this. Once we are able to tackle that piece, the committee can then determine what information is missing, who we need to hear from to provide us with that information, and how and where the committee needs to take the study next.

While Ms. Vandenbeld has given us a number of very important and appropriate witnesses, let's save them for another time. The motion is exactly what we need at this time. As an incredible committee committed to doing an excellent job on this study, we can revisit what we need to do later, after we've gotten through this phase.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** You're welcome.

Ms. Vandenbeld.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld:** Madam Chair, I want to respond to what Ms. Alleslev just said.

I think there is a genuine fairness issue here. To my understanding, there was a motion passed by this committee previously that didn't name witnesses. Then, of course, we have this emergency meeting, which just came with a list of witnesses. Liberal members, of course, have our own witnesses, and were not prepared to put those names publicly.

However, now that this has been done, what I'm understanding is that my honourable colleague opposite is now suggesting that the witnesses brought by the opposition are the priority, and that the witnesses that the Liberals had planned to submit, according to the process that had previously been agreed upon by the committee, are somehow less important. There's a real fairness issue there.

I would venture, Madam Chair, that it is equally important that all members of this committee have the opportunity to put forward witnesses and to not have names that come from one side be prioritized over names from another side just because of the process in which they were put forward. These are vitally important witnesses who have a tremendous amount to say to this committee. I would very much hope that the members of this committee would vote to hear from those witnesses.

Thank you.

● (1230)

**The Chair:** Ms. Zahid.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I agree with my colleague on what Ms. Alleslev has said. It is a fairness issue. It's an important study and we want to hear from all the witnesses. Justice should be given to all the witnesses. Usually, the process of the committee is that we submit the list of witnesses. The clerk then arranges and schedules them to appear before the committee, based on their availability.

We can't say that those witnesses who are named in the motion are more important than those Ms. Vandenbeld has submitted. Equal opportunity should exist for all the witnesses. It is really very important in terms of how we treat everyone. There are no justifications for saying that one witness is a better witness than another witness. That's really not the right thing to say. I think it would be unfair to the other witnesses.

Everyone should be treated fairly. It should be up to the clerk to schedule the witnesses based on their availability and based on the calendar. If we are saying we will have four meetings, then for every panel the clerk should have the opportunity to schedule the witnesses.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Ms. Alleslev, go ahead.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Madam Chair, I'm very concerned by the comments of my honourable colleague Ms. Vandenberg, that she would say that witnesses are opposition or government and that somehow we determine at the committee whom to hear from based on partisan perspectives. That doesn't do justice to the witnesses or to the committee, which wants to hear comments independent of partisan-appropriate comments on a very balanced and non-partisan study. This is above partisanship. This is what is in the best interest of the Canadian Forces and our country, so it's very disconcerting to hear it put like that.

Let's talk about the witnesses who are in the motion. There is the Minister of National Defence. One could argue that he is a government witness, not an opposition witness. That's if we were even going to look at framing it in any kind of partisan terms, which I would highly propose not to do. Second, we're looking at the acting chief of the defence staff. He is the top military person—again, not a Liberal/opposition/government witness. There is the soon-to-be vice chief of the defence staff, who is the second in command to the chief of the defence staff. There is the head of the Canadian Forces national investigation service. There is the person who wrote the report from which Op Honour resulted.

These are critical witnesses. These are the logical place to start this kind of discussion. They are not opposition or government witnesses. They are the right foundation to get the information to provide us—all of us on committee—with a starting point.

We have every opportunity to call witnesses after that. In the interest of due diligence around a good study and in the interest of figuring out how many meetings we need to do, and to do justice to it, we need to get started. This motion gives us a good foundation to get started on this study. Then we have every opportunity to revisit additional witnesses based on the information we get from these witnesses, to do justice to this auspicious responsibility we have been given to do this study.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Larouche, you have the floor.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** I agree wholeheartedly that we should not turn this issue into an overly partisan game. We want to protect women in the Canadian Armed Forces. We don't want to read any more articles like the one that came out yesterday about a senior female officer who had to resign from the forces because she was disgusted with the culture in the Canadian Forces. The story was about Eleanor Taylor. We know that, because we all read the article.

The committee needs to conduct further studies, but we will conduct them later. The important thing is that we address this issue as quickly as possible. We can deal with the issue at the same time as the Standing Committee on National Defence. As Ms. Alleslev said, the two committees will not be hearing the same witnesses, with the exception of Ms. Deschamps. They will hear from different witnesses, who will shed a different light on this issue.

I hope that, within the next hour, we will be able to come to an agreement so that the committee can proceed with the study. I would remind you that this is a study that the Standing Committee on the Status of Women was supposed to do before the last election was called in 2019. So our committee had already attempted to address the issue of violence in the military.

I feel it's very important. We started out by voting to have four meetings, but now we are adding other witnesses. I'm afraid that will only water everything down. Let's start by hearing the witnesses on the list and having the four meetings. After that, we can agree to add witnesses.

Ms. Vandenberg, the list you suggested certainly makes a lot of sense. In fact, when the time comes, I'll be happy to hear from the people on it, but we have to start somewhere. We have scheduled the meetings to start on March 23. Let's begin with the witnesses. Our committee can come to a consensus; it's what we do. The committee is consensus-based and serves first and foremost as an advocate for women and to advance the status of women.

For all these reasons, I believe we should use the next 20 minutes to agree on the motion, and then begin our study next week.

I want to thank everyone for their work on this committee, which plays such an essential role.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We are voting on the newest amendment, to add the witnesses Ms. Vandenberg specified.

Madam Clerk, you may take the vote.

• (1240)

**The Clerk:** The result is five yeas and five nays.

**The Chair:** I also vote no.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

(Motion agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

Excellent.

The clerk will then organize the meetings as per the motion. I wanted to let you all know that we are tabling our COVID-19 report in the House and intending to do a press release to let people know that it's available. I believe the clerk is going to send the wording on that, so you can have a look.

I will see you all at our next meeting, on the 23rd.

Do you have a comment, Mrs. Shanahan?

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan:** I just wanted to ask when we can submit witnesses to this study. Could the clerk give us some instructions on that?

**The Clerk:** You can begin sending them as you wish. Initially we had discussed a deadline, but we will proceed with the motion as adopted today and the timeline that's indicated in that motion.

**The Chair:** Madame Larouche.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** I wanted to ask basically the same question as Mrs. Shanahan, particularly because we both want to invite the same witness, who is on my list and my Liberal colleagues' new list. I would invite other committee members to suggest names, because, after what we will experience, I imagine we will have to add one or two meetings. I hope so. I think it would be worthwhile. However, I believe the deadline for suggesting new witnesses was March 18.

Do we have an extension, Madam Clerk?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** It's up to the will of the committee to add witnesses and meetings as they want.

We have, in this motion, the priority of how we will proceed. From there, at the next opportunity for committee business or the next time we are talking about this topic, the committee can add witnesses.

Is it the will of the committee to adjourn?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Very good.

The meeting is adjourned.

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