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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Chair: Ms. Marilyn Gladu





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• (1110)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** Welcome to meeting number 26 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

We are in hybrid format. We are going to be hearing from our witnesses, and then suspending for a vote in the House.

When you're speaking, wait until you're recognized and then click on your microphone icon to activate your mike. Keep your mike on mute otherwise, and address your comments through the chair. You obviously will have the interpretation button at the bottom of your screen.

Let me now welcome our witnesses for our study of sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces.

We have today Rear-Admiral Rebecca Patterson, commander of the Canadian Forces health services, and a defence champion for women; Major-General Jennie Carignan, military personnel command; and Brigadier-General Lise Bourgon, the visiting defence fellow 2020-21 at Queen's University, and defence champion for women, peace and security.

Each of you will have five minutes for your speeches. We'll begin with Rear-Admiral Patterson.

**Rear-Admiral Rebecca Patterson (Commander, Canadian Forces Health Services, Defence Champion for Women, Department of National Defence):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning.

Good morning to our committee members.

Thank you for inviting me today to participate in this committee. I come to you in my capacity as the defence champion for women.

I joined the Canadian Armed Forces over 30 years ago, which was, if you think about it, where we started the integration of women into all occupations within the Canadian Armed Forces. I have personally witnessed and experienced great advances for women in the CAF. I've witnessed women becoming fully integrated into all occupations and taking on leadership roles that had never previously been filled by women.

In fact, today is quite a moment because it's the first time any parliamentary committee has ever had three women generals and flag officers as witnesses.

Although we've come a long way as part of this evolution, sustainable culture change is a long-term, progressive and cumulative

effort, and we have to continue to work to reshape our culture to achieve the ultimate goal of being truly equitable, diverse and inclusive.

As a defence champion for women and a senior leader in the Canadian Armed Forces, I'm committed to the advancement of employment equity. This includes establishing a positive work environment that values the different perspectives an inclusive workforce brings, while embracing diversity as a strength. The CAF will continue to address the complex challenges still facing women with a comprehensive approach to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent women from serving Canada to their absolute, full potential.

Recruiting and retaining women and other diverse groups is seen as absolutely critical for long-term, sustainable culture change within the Canadian Armed Forces. We have seen growth in numbers, but we realize that we're going to have to continue to recruit and retain amazing women who wish to serve their nation in the Canadian Armed Forces.

As a defence champion for women, I remain committed to championing the voice of women by advocating for the desired cultural change. As champion, I'm also in a position to give voice to women's concerns and represent CAF and defence women at senior leadership forums. The Defence Women's Advisory Organization is one such group through which women of the Defence team can connect, express their concerns and be heard. Through this forum we identify systemic issues that are brought forward so that the CAF and the department can address the conditions of service and that we can stop barriers that impact women's ability to serve effectively.

The CAF recognizes that long-term, sustainable culture change requires commitment and engagement at all ranks, from the tactical to the strategic. However, we also recognize that we have a long way to go yet. Establishing a culture of belonging, dignity and justice will help unite us.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. That's great.

Now we'll go on to Major-General Carignan for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**MGen Jennie Carignan (Military Personnel Command, Department of National Defence):** Madam Chair, members of the committee, it is my pleasure today to appear alongside my teammates.

I am Major-General Jennie Carignan. I have just returned home from leading the NATO mission in Iraq and am transitioning to the position of deputy chief of military personnel for the Canadian Armed Forces.

We have incredible people in the Canadian Armed Forces who do difficult and often dangerous work. I am constantly inspired by them, which is why I am still serving today. My colleagues and I have a combined experience of nearly 100 years in the Canadian Armed Forces.

My own experience as a woman, soldier and leader has been both very challenging and rewarding. I have had the privilege of leading troops in expeditionary operations ranging from traditional peacekeeping to combat, capacity building, and at home in Canada, support to provincial authorities.

During my career as a member of the forces, I have faced three main obstacles: first, the preconception that women are weak; second, the preconception that women cannot succeed in a combat environment; and third, the preconception that women cannot be both soldiers and mothers.

Over the years, I have also found that men face the same obstacles, but we just choose to ignore them because our preconceived notions about men are different. The spotlight remains on women. For all serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces, overcoming these barriers is a matter of both individual determination and, more importantly, support and guidance from peers and leaders who want us to reach our full potential. What we mean by a strong military ethos is that our sisters and brothers in arms are supported at all levels so that they can give their best in the service of Canada.

Unfortunately, in some cases, this guiding principle has been lost. I believe that sexual misconduct is a symptom of a larger problem with a part of our culture that needs to be changed. While it is incumbent upon us to understand that our military culture is what allows Canadians to put themselves in harm's way to defend Canada, as leaders we must remain extremely vigilant about the toxic elements that this culture can produce.

When we see wrongdoing at any level, we must act quickly and fairly. We must foster a culture free of fear of retaliation for speaking out or blowing the whistle. As my colleagues have mentioned, culture change requires a sustained effort on the part of every member of the Canadian Forces to ensure that our behaviours, attitudes and beliefs are consistent with our values. That is why we continue to work to ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces reflect and celebrate the uniqueness of the strength of all Canadians.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to your questions.

• (1115)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Major General.

Now we will go on to Brigadier-General Bourgon for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

**BGen Lise Bourgon (Visiting Defence Fellow 2020-21 at Queen's University, and Defence Champion for Women, Peace and Security, Department of National Defence):** Madam Chair, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity today to appear alongside my colleagues.

[*English*]

I am currently the visiting defence fellow at Queen's University and also the Canadian Armed Forces champion for women, peace and security.

[*Translation*]

I began my military life as an officer cadet over 33 years ago at the Royal Military College Saint-Jean.

[*English*]

Since then, as an officer and a maritime helicopter pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force, I have seen and experienced many of the unique challenges faced by women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*Translation*]

Nonetheless, I believe in the importance of the Canadian Armed Forces and the importance of its missions, and its ability to learn and adapt as an institution.

[*English*]

When I joined the Canadian Armed Forces in the late eighties, women had to change to fit in because it was a man's world. As one of the first women air crew to sail on naval ships, I had to forcefully make my way in, and was even thrown out of a ship because of my gender. Slowly, attitudes have changed. Women made their way. We showed that we belong and that we can make a difference. Slowly, the CAF evolved. From being merely tolerated, women were accepted and welcomed.

[*Translation*]

Indeed, great strides have been made over the past 35 years and many barriers have been removed, but we still face challenges.

[English]

To this day, sexual misconduct remains an issue for the women and men of the CAF. Any form of sexual misconduct within the ranks is unacceptable. It harms staff members, jeopardizes operational effectiveness and is inconsistent with our values and ethical principles.

[Translation]

There is still work to be done to address these challenges, not to mention the structural and cultural inequities that remain at play within the Canadian military.

[English]

As part of my fellowship at Queen's University, my research has focused on the integration of women in the Canadian Armed Forces through greater inclusion. Integration is allowing people to come in. However, inclusion recognizes and embraces those differences so that all people feel valued and important and have equitable opportunities.

[Translation]

Therefore, it is time to embrace these differences and create the conditions for women, men, indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2+ community members, and visible minorities to excel and be fuelled by a sense of respect, dignity, safety, and belonging.

• (1120)

[English]

This is our opportunity to build a CAF that our people deserve and that all Canadians expect.

[Translation]

Thank you very much for your interest, and I look forward to the question period.

[English]

**The Chair:** Very good. It's so exciting to have three powerful women from the Canadian Armed Forces here to testify.

We're now going to suspend the meeting so that we can vote in the House, and we'll return afterwards to begin the rounds of questioning. It could take 15 or 20 minutes, I would expect.

We'll suspend. Thank you.

• (1120)

(Pause)

• (1140)

**The Chair:** I'm going to proceed to the first round of questions, starting with Ms. Alleslev for six minutes.

Do we have Ms. Alleslev?

Let's go with Ms. Zahid for six minutes, and we'll come back to Ms. Alleslev.

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

Thank you to all of the witnesses for appearing before the committee today and providing your important input.

My first question is for General Carignan.

Thank you for taking time to provide your input to this study. We can't highlight enough the importance of having a survivor-centric, trauma-informed, feminist lens to sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

General Carignan, you have had an extensive career serving both internationally and domestically. What was the culture in the Canadian Armed Forces in the early stages of your career? Where do you see it now, and what would be your recommendations going forward?

**MGen Jennie Carignan:** My sense of the culture and the culture change is that it's always a journey; it is not an event. We have engaged in a few cultural changes that I have witnessed over my 35 years in the service. We have grown into a different military since I joined in 1986. I have seen great progress.

The military has changed from when I was there. I have a daughter and a son as well in the military, and I've seen changes, but it is clear that we now need to take this further. We constantly need vigilance over our own culture to make sure that we keep its qualities while working on the toxic elements, if I can express myself that way.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

• (1145)

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** My second question is for Admiral Patterson.

Admiral Patterson, when it comes to sexual misconduct, survivors have experienced negative effects on their mental health and physical well-being. Given the impact on both the body and mind, how important is it to have trauma-informed services and policy changes?

I can't hear you.

**A voice:** Can we suspend? We are having audio problems.

**The Chair:** Let's suspend momentarily. You won't lose your time, Ms. Zahid.

• (1145)

(Pause)

• (1145)

**The Chair:** We'll resume then.

We're back to Ms. Zahid.

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

Admiral Patterson, were you able to hear my question, or should I repeat it?

**MGen Jennie Carignan:** Madam Chair, it would probably help if you could just repeat the question.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Madam Chair, I hope will get my time.

**The Chair:** Yes.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thank you.

Admiral Patterson, when it comes to sexual misconduct, survivors have experienced negative effects on their mental health and physical well-being. Given the impact on both the body and the mind, how important is it to have trauma-informed services and policy changes?

• (1150)

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** I think, first and foremost, what we really need to do is prevent these incidents from happening in the first place. As we approach this, I think we need to look at it from a prevention perspective, and it takes a number of forms.

Primary prevention means that we create programs, systems, policies, structures and training so that people are not likely to cause incidents to happen. We then go into a secondary look at things, such as how we can do better bystander intervention training.

Then I'll talk about survivors. This is where it is absolutely critical that we put this first and foremost in looking at how we better support survivors. Your comment about trauma-informed communication doesn't just come from the health care sector, but needs to be the approach for all communication with people who've survived traumatic events.

With that, it can't just be how we speak. It has to be how we provide support, both from a health care perspective in having the right programs that are targeted for people who've experienced sexual trauma, and even within the chain of command and within our other different structures within the Canadian Armed Forces so that all people know how to approach those who have been harmed. The bottom line up front is that it has to be from the perspective of the person who has been harmed.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Admiral, do you think that any health-related considerations can inform our policy recommendations?

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** From my perspective, in my day job, I can tell you that one thing that is always of great benefit is making that we are able to focus on the targeted research required to look at the impacts of all types of trauma on women and other marginalized groups. The majority of research done in Canada is not on the groups that we are talking about today. Certainly in terms of research in health care, it would be extremely beneficial.

Moving forward, we will be looking at all of our programs and basically applying a sex- and gender-based lens to make sure that if we have gaps, we identify where those gaps are. At the end of the day, what we are trying to do is to ensure that all people within the Canadian Armed Forces, regardless of where they're coming from, are getting the care they require to meet their unique and distinct needs.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thank you, Admiral.

I have one more question. We have seen that there is Stats Canada data on Canadian Armed Forces members reporting sexual misconduct. What are your main takeaways from the data that is available?

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** I will take this from my perspective as a commander, and also in terms of the voices of the women in the Canadian Armed Forces. What I take away from it is that we still have a lot of work to do in creating an environment where people actually feel they can come forward and share what has happened to them. Not only can we make sure that we protect them to the best of our ability as they move through the processes, but we can also work on prevention programs to determine why these things happened, who was doing them, and what we can do to actually move forward and maybe have fewer people needing to report in the first place.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we will go to Ms. Alleslev for six minutes.

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

I'd like to open by saying what an honour and a privilege it is to be with you, the witnesses, today and to say that all of us were junior officers in the late 1980s when we started our careers. If I could be so bold, I'd like to take a moment to say, wow, we haven't done half bad, eh? This is just testimony to why we make a meaningful contribution to the Canadian Forces, whether we decide to stay for our entire career or go to do other things. This is the value and the contribution that sometimes gets overlooked, but that women make to our society. This is why it's so important and such a gift for us to have.

The depressing part, of course, is that we're here to talk about something that is so serious and so significant and that shows that we perhaps haven't made all of the progress we needed to make over the last 30 years.

The military is highly effective at setting objectives and performance metrics, measuring against them and determining if we're achieving those outcomes. Could you share with me the metrics around the number of women per classification, per rank? Do we know how many are remaining in rank relative to the men before they get promoted? What is our attraction and retention rate by classification and trade and all those kinds of things? Could you give me an idea of what we're measuring and how we're doing against those metrics?

• (1155)

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** Madam Chair, if you like, I can take this one.

Those metrics do exist. Unfortunately, I don't have them with me today. If we could take that question on notice, we can provide that information for you.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** What I'm actually looking for is just what is measured. Yes, I'd love to see what the actual numbers are, but can you confirm that we do have (a), a strategy and (b), that we measure the number of women by trade and by classification? How are we keeping them? Do they tend to leave earlier than men, and do they get promoted at the same rate as men? Are we measuring all of those those kinds of time and rank retention variables and, therefore, doing something about them?

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** Madam Chair, I can confirm that we do have metrics on those things. They come through a number of different forms. It could be social science research done through the DGMPPRA, our research arm within the Canadian Armed Forces—they certainly have that type of information—as well as regular statistical reporting of percentages by occupation, gender and where they're located. Most certainly, that's a question we can take on order. We will get more details for you.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Who's accountable for that? What mechanism reviews that data to see if we're doing better or worse? Who's accountable for it?

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** Madam Chair, the data is actually held in the chief of military personnel command. That is who holds that information and reports on it.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Yes, but they're a reporting organization, and not accountable for changing the metrics and ensuring that we move against them. Yes, they're the data collection guys, and they can tell you, but who's accountable for making sure that the time and rank, on average, is the same for women and men? Who is ensuring that the retention rate for master corporal supply techs is the same, regardless of gender or minority? Who is accountable for watching and taking action?

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** Madam Chair, that is a great question.

As you know, all members of the Canadian Armed Forces have unique and distinct reasons why they remain in the Canadian Armed Forces for certain periods of time, so equal is not necessarily equitable.

With regard to the data that we collect, I think it's very important that we are able to go beyond counting and do a little deeper dive on what it actually means. That progress is starting and is under way. Again, I have to say that we know that we have a lot more work to do. I think the greatest advancement for us is the fact that we're even taking that data in and collecting that data to start with.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** And how long—

**A voice:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Go ahead.

**The Chair:** Brigadier General, did you want to say something?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** Yes, Madam Chair.

I just want to add that we're doing very well at understanding why women join the military and also why women leave the military. Every time someone leaves the military, there's an exit survey that is being done where we ask the question “Why are you leaving?” This is being tracked. We are looking at those results so that we can put in place initiatives for the retention of women and mi-

nority groups. Recruitment is very, very important, but retention is even more important. Every person who leaves the military needs to be replaced. We need to keep tracking and really making some changes so that we can recruit and retain our people longer.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Do we have a high level of confidence that—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but that's your time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche, you have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I thank the three witnesses today, who confirm the importance of working to improve the confidence of women in the Canadian Forces. They have a place to take. I hope that the latest denunciations will not discourage too many women from joining the forces.

Ms. Patterson, Ms. Carignan and, of course, Ms. Bourgon, I congratulate you on your involvement in the armed forces.

I think it was Ms. Carignan who pointed out that between the three of you, you have over 100 years of combined experience, which is remarkable.

I'd like to start by going back to your opening remarks.

Ms. Patterson, you mentioned forums and consultations. I'd like you to talk more about that. How would that help women begin to trust the forces again?

• (1200)

[*English*]

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** Madam Chair, the group I'm talking about is the Defence Women's Advisory Organization. Under our employment equity program we have employment equity groups for women, visible minorities, indigenous persons and persons with disabilities. These groups, again, come from both the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence, because we work together and are one team. These forums are voluntary groups that exist pretty much on every base and wing across Canada. They give chances for people to get together, to have a conduit for a voice to share successes, but also to pass up concerns.

We have an annual conference when all the national co-chairs of these defence organizations come together so they can share with senior leadership in the whole of the department the things that we need to look at to address barriers to true equity and inclusion within the Canadian Armed Forces.

The next layer to this group, of course, is the champions that you've heard about. People like me as champion for women also give them a voice within the most senior leadership levels, and I will add that I have a co-chair, Chief Warrant Officer Crystal Harris. The intent is to try to address some of the barriers to speaking in a hierarchical structure, and so we have very active men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces who are very willing to share their impressions of what's going on.

I'm sorry, I meant to add that we have very recently set up the LGBTQ2+ defence team pride network, which I've been connected to and am very proud of.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Of course, you and your forum are champions at discussing this, so I guess we can discuss some of the recommendations a little later.

I would now like to address Ms. Carignan.

Ms. Carignan, you talked about women being perceived as weaker than men. You also talked about military ethics, saying that sexual assault and misconduct were symptoms of a much larger problem. Can you elaborate on that for us?

You also talked about the importance of having a culture free of retaliation. We've heard from witnesses on this committee that they felt like they were retaliated against by their superiors when they engaged in whistleblowing. I'd like you to talk about what could be done to avoid these retaliations against women who decide to start a process to report their abuser.

**MGen Jennie Carignan:** Thank you for your question.

The military culture, in and of itself, allows people to do extraordinary things as a group and as a team. The values that make a team capable of dealing with very hostile environments are good, and fundamental to that team's success. Values like obedience, loyalty, and fighting spirit are all things that are very important to having cohesive teams.

However, if this is not framed by discipline, toxicity can easily set in within teams. Very quickly, bullying can be confused with leadership, arrogance with confidence, lying with loyalty, and so on. If there is no strict discipline in this regard, toxicity sets in and all this creates power dynamics within the hierarchy. That's what makes things like sexual misconduct and other unprofessional behaviour happen as well.

I could go on and on, but I think I have answered your question. At least, I hope so.

• (1205)

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Yes, of course.

To conclude, I'll address Ms. Bourgon.

**The Chair:** That was the end of your turn.

[*English*]

Ms. Mathysen, you have six minutes.

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

I, too, want to express my gratitude. To see such strong women leaders in your roles....

You all spoke about these changes. While they are slow, they are happening, and that's good to hear.

The status of women committee—this committee—did a study of the Canadian Armed Forces and women serving in 2019. What the committee heard was really quite disturbing in some regards, and clearly there was a need for change.

I want to ask a few questions about whether, even in these last few years, there have been changes from that. For example, there were stories from women who came forward and talked about starting their basic training, even leadership training, who mentioned how all future soldiers had to go through various medical tests where their proficiencies were checked and so on. As well, all the women had to have pregnancy tests. Before they can even start their course in any way, shape or form, women who are pregnant are often removed, even from the beginning in those training courses.

Is that still the practice, or has that stopped? Ultimately, I see that as a discriminatory practice.

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** Madam Chair, because of my day job with health services, I should probably take that question.

I have to admit that I don't have the answer for you. What would do justice to you is if I took that question on notice and provided you with a response and some context around that as well.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Absolutely. Perfect.

In 2019, the committee heard specifically from Ms. Nash. She started naval officer training, and she became pregnant. One of you—I think it was Madam Carignan—talked about this misperception that women who serve can't be mothers at the same time. Because of Ms. Nash's pregnancy, she was immediately removed from her environmental training program. She was denied the opportunity to even start within that program.

Could you talk about and expand upon, hopefully, the changes that you've seen even from just a few years ago? Has that changed from what you've seen?

**MGen Jennie Carignan:** There are a couple of factors that we have to take into account with regard to pregnancies and also as a commander. One, we have to make sure that the mother and the baby are provided with a safe environment. Two, operationally, is that we can continue the mission. Three, we want to make sure that the mother is supported through this process and that her career is not being impacted by the pregnancy.

Currently, there are policies to manage pregnancies, but policies don't necessarily cover all of the cases. We have to exercise judgment and work this out with the service woman and her particular condition. This is multilayered, and it is not simple to manage because we're talking about a person who we want to make sure we support through this process. At the same time, we want to support her career.

The policies could probably be reviewed to be more focused towards women. There is work to be done in that sense. I think General Bourgon has done extensive work in that field, and she could probably expand on more of the policies to specifically support women throughout their service.

• (1210)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Okay.

Certainly, Ms. Bourgon, if you could expand....

I think the key here is that they shouldn't necessarily be entirely removed from leadership. There are other ways that they could continue to serve, continue to provide that leadership, and be encouraged along those leadership paths.

**MGen Jennie Carignan:** Absolutely. There are many options to be explored. There are various solutions to each case. There's no one-size-fits-all solution, that's for sure.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Okay.

One of the other things that we've heard now—I'll just switch gears a little bit.... We heard in that 2019 testimony that there is a different definition of sexual assault within the Canadian Armed Forces than there is within the Criminal Code of Canada. To your knowledge, has that changed? Does that still exist? Do you see this as a problem?

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** Madam Chair, the definition of sexual assault is the same as in the Criminal Code because it is a Criminal Code case. I can comment on that. Does that answer your question?

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Very good. That's your time.

Now we're going to Ms. Wong in the second round for five minutes.

**Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Also, congratulations to our three witnesses. We are so proud of your achievements in the military.

My questions relate to Rear Admiral Patterson.

In your opening remarks, you mentioned that you are the commander of the Canadian Forces health services and that your secondary duty is as the defence champion for women. You also listed some of the responsibilities to be more detailed. As the defence champion for women, who do you report to?

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** As defence champion, there are two functional leads that I work with. One of them is ADM(HR-Civ) Mr. Kin Choi—to look after the women of the department—and the other is the chief of military personnel command for the military aspects. However, one of the roles of the champion is to be able to basically transcend the chain of command. If there is an issue that is brought forward, as champion, I can talk to people from the tactical level right up to the chief of the defence staff or the deputy minister, if required. I have certainly used that privilege in order to support the needs of women.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Being the defence champion is only a part-time job. Do you think that that's not enough, that maybe it should be made into a full-time job so that you can function in that capacity more fully?

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** It is a very rich and meaningful secondary duty. I have to admit that it's something that I'm obviously quite passionate about, regardless of my gender. I think that, especially as we move forward, making sure that we have the proper mechanisms in place to ensure that there is a champion for women's voice that is available easily and readily is going to be quite important, so we certainly welcome any recommendations that the committee has.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Now I have a couple of questions for all of you.

Should there be an independent, investigative review authority with regard to our topic of discussion right now, namely, misconduct?

• (1215)

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** I can certainly start and share the conversation with my colleagues. I think, as we move forward, we need to remain open to anything and any structures and external advice and support that make sense to help us move forward in terms of change. The men and the women of the CAF believe this. When we talk about thinking about things in a way that we've never thought about them before, we need to be open and ready to look at anything that will help us move forward.

Respectfully, may I pass that to General Bourgon?

Would you like to comment on that?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** I think, as you said, we need to listen to the experts because we're going to need help—external authority or the experts from the civilian side coming to help us to change our culture. You know, one way or another, we are all listening. We're looking for options, and we are welcoming the committee's recommendation.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Thank you.

I would like to ask a second question to all of you.

We heard from a woman who conducted training at the Royal Military College, who was met with ridicule and whose message was discounted.

In your opinion, is the current training meeting the objectives? If not, what should be changed?

I used to be an educator. That's why I'm interested in this question.

**MGen Jennie Carignan:** To me, we always go back to the culture. We have a lot of great guidelines and policies in terms of training. However, there is a gap between what we say and what we do. We will definitely need to have a look at changing our culture in terms of how we do things. We should have a look at our manners and how they line up with the values we actually all support.

Culture can be changed through daily actions. We'll need to look at how we recruit, how we train, how we conduct physical fitness training, and how we promote and select, and what it is that we reward, so we will have to review our manners or how we do these things in our daily activities.

**The Chair:** Very good.

We'll go to Ms. Hutchings, for five minutes.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I too echo the sentiments of my colleagues. It's such an honour to be with you ladies. You are true champions, and it's obvious that you've broken many glass ceilings to get to where you are, and I know you're going to break many more as you work on the challenges.

I have a question for each of you witnesses. Could you discuss the relationship between the Canadian Armed Forces and the military family resource centres? How would increased investments in the MFRC support the atmosphere and overall well-being of CAF members? How would an increase in access to child care impact CAF members and their families?

I'll start with you, Rear Admiral.

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The relationship with the Canadian Armed Forces and the MFRCs is a collaborative one, but I think I need to go back to families. The Canadian Armed Forces is not just a group of individuals who serve; we are nothing without our families. If you care for the families, you care for the service member. There are many pressures that come with being a service member. I am part of a married service couple. I have two children, and one of the biggest challenges for me was frequently moving or unexpectedly being deployed. If I did not have the military family resource centres there to help support me, particularly in terms of child care, I actually, I have to tell you, don't know how I would have coped.

Therefore, child care, when I talk with the women of the CAF, is a very critical issue. It benefits mothers and fathers and non-binary parents. It benefits everybody. One thing we do find is a challenge is that every time you move, you're bopped to the bottom of a child care list. One of the priorities we hear about very often is getting access to universal, accessible, quality child care that is available for more than just nine to five and actually meets the hours of service members.

I can tell you that where we need to go with culture change and how we look after our families are as much parts of our culture as is dealing with things that are internal to our force structure.

• (1220)

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Thank you for that.

Major-General Carignan, would you like to add anything to that?

**MGen Jennie Carignan:** Madam Chair, Rear Admiral Patterson says it all. With my four children, it has been an uphill battle every time we have moved. Our service members all need child care in order to be able to do their jobs properly.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Thank you.

I'll now turn to you, Brigadier-General Bourgon.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

As part of my studies on inclusion, one of the big things I've realized is that women and men are different and we have to look at those differences. We need to ensure there are programs to fill those gaps. We've seen that the traditional role of women is still there—taking care of the children, their parents, and the home. We have to ensure, for women but also for men, that family is supported.

I'll just reinforce the message that Rear Admiral Patterson was giving. Fifty-seven per cent of our military families don't have access to day care through our military family resource centre because there's not enough capacity. As well, 30% of the people—the women, anyway—who are releasing from the military indicate that child care is one of the considerable reasons for leaving. It's really, really important to focus on that. That is how we're going to value our women serving in the forces and how we're going to keep them serving. As I said earlier, the retention is super important. That family piece is critical.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Thank you for that.

We all know that Seamless Canada is one of DND's initiatives to help address the challenges of families being posted in various positions and moving from province to province.

Which one of you would like to comment on that initiative?

Would you like to, Rear-Admiral?

**RAdm Rebecca Patterson:** I have an arm's-length understanding, but Seamless Canada is an absolutely essential service, and not only to connect, as our military families move around the country, to try to smooth out access to health care. Child care is part of it too, but, again, that's a provincially run issue. It also benefits our veterans. It's making sure that for them, along with the families who are moving, service remains seamless.

When you're looking at what service truly means to women and men, it basically means cradle to grave—from the moment of enrolment until you may no longer be on this earth—and making sure that projects like Seamless Canada remain supported and empowered. I think the work it is doing right now is really important, and we should continue to expand toward VAC within the provinces and territories to help make transitions for families easier. I think that's quite important. It's a very positive project.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Thank you for your service.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Ms. Larouche, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

I'd like to continue to ask questions of the witnesses. This time my question is for Ms. Bourgon.

Ms. Bourgon, in your opening remarks you mentioned that the many barriers women may face in the Canadian Armed Forces could compromise operational effectiveness. That's what caught my attention, and I'd like to hear a little more about that.

In addition, I would like you to talk to me about structural inequalities and what could be done to promote minority rights.

Those are two topics I picked up from your testimony, so I'd like you to tell me a little bit more about them.

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** Thank you.

As I said earlier, my study is specifically about the inclusion of women and how we could value women, minorities, and LGBTQ+ groups more, because, all in all, we are different. And that difference is a strength. We really need to ensure the continuity of diversity.

As I said, where cultural and structural barriers are concerned, there is not just one simple solution. We need to revisit the organization as a whole, and administrative policies. We need to review the way we evaluate and promote our staff. There is still a bias against women. We need to take a closer look at how we define a leader, success and how we reward people.

It's also worth looking at inclusive leadership to see what the qualities of an inclusive leader are, because that's really important.

On the equipment and infrastructure side, we still have uniforms that aren't female-friendly. Our protective gear is really designed for a man's body, so it doesn't fit a woman's body. This obviously leads to women being less effective in operations. They find themselves in more danger, because they are not properly protected.

We also need to look at training and education, how we provide our training on our values and ethos.

It's important to look at cultural intelligence and gender intelligence. We need to recognize the differences between women and men, because we don't respond in the same way. But this difference does not mean that women are weak. For example, when a woman sheds tears, it does not mean that she is not able to cope with the situation. It's just the way she expresses herself. So it's important that everyone understand the differences between the sexes to ensure greater respect.

Finally, it's all these little aspects of organizational culture that we really need to change to get to the point of being more inclusive.

• (1225)

[English]

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we're going to Ms. Mathysen for a two and a half minutes.

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

I truly appreciate hearing about the need for accessible and affordable universal child care. It's certainly something this committee has heard a lot. I would like you to expand on that. We're also doing a study on the responsibilities of women for unpaid care work, so if you could, expand on the need for child care. Of course, there are stresses on women regarding elder care and family care as well, for those needing more.

Are there supports in place for that? What would you put forward as a recommendation for the unpaid care roles taken on by women, both generally and through the armed forces, especially when, as you talked about, they have to travel all the time or be away from their homes?

**BGen Lise Bourgon:** Madam Chair, I will take this.

It's very interesting to see the traditional role that women are still.... Certainly, my research showed that men have one more hour every day of free time. Women are busier with children, parents, groceries and everything else. Our women soldiers are a lot busier than their counterparts. We have to take that into consideration.

In the military we are posted all over the world, all over Canada, away from our family. I'm super close to my mom, but I was never close in terms of physical space. I was in Halifax and she was in Ottawa. So when you have an emergency.... Day care is really a source of stress. You have up to a year of wait time for access to day care under the age of five. It's very difficult when you move. When you're very far from family, you don't have access to family, and you need to find day care. The operational world starts. You get posted and you deploy right away.

That access to day care is super important, as is access to shift care. The military doesn't work from nine to five. We work 24-7. We need access to shift and emergency care. I remember flying a Sea King and landing in a parking lot. My husband was at sea. The day care closed at six. I was not there to go and pick up my children. Who's going to do that?

It's important to have those mechanisms in place so that we provide support for men and women—mostly women, again, because of the traditional values. If we want to keep our personnel, that's what we have to provide.

**The Chair:** Very good.

I want to thank our witnesses and to say again how proud and thankful we are for your service. I apologize as well for the delays from the voting that we had.

Committee members, are you all okay to stay until about 1:30 p.m. so that we can have a fulsome panel for the second one?

I'm seeing some nodding. Okay.

We'll go right to our second panel. I want to welcome our witnesses from the Department of National Defence. Brigadier-General Atherton is the director general of professional military conduct. Dr. Denise Preston is the executive director of the sexual misconduct response centre.

You will each have five minutes for your remarks.

• (1230)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** On a point of order, Madam Chair.

There is no interpretation.

[English]

**The Chair:** Clerk, can you check on the translation?

Can you hear the translation now?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Excellent.

We'll begin with Brigadier-General Atherton.

[English]

**Brigadier-General Andrew Atherton (Director General of Professional Military Conduct, Department of National Defence):** Good afternoon, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss the work that the Canadian Armed Forces has undertaken to prevent and address sexual misconduct over the past six years.

As introduced, I am Brigadier-General Andrew Atherton, the director general of professional military conduct.

My organization leads the strategic level planning and coordination for the CAF's efforts to address sexual misconduct. Our primary focus has been to develop the foundational policies, procedures and programs needed to support Operation Honour and the CAF's wider efforts to promote institutional culture change.

As we heard from Lieutenant-General Eyre on March 24, Operation Honour has culminated and it's time to transition to a new approach. We are developing a way forward plan that will focus on culture change. As part of that work, we'll take stock of Operation Honour and we'll see what has worked, and more importantly, what hasn't worked. We all know that there is still a lot more progress to be made. We also know that despite our best intentions, we haven't always got things right. That said, there is no question that the work accomplished through Operation Honour will provide a solid foundation for any effort as we move forward.

Since 2015, the CAF has made steady progress in implementing a range of programs, policies and practices needed for addressing sexual misconduct and, most importantly, providing the support for those who have been affected by it. The recommendations that were made by Madame Deschamps in 2015, following her external re-

view, have been our touchstone throughout, and we have taken steps to address all 10 of the recommendations.

In addition, we have responded to the recommendations from parliamentary committees, the Auditor General and from external advisers. We have also actively engaged with experts from the sexual misconduct response centre to ensure that our approaches were informed and appropriate.

We also know that we must move beyond a reactive approach focused on incident response if we are to achieve enduring culture change. We need to target the elements of our institutional culture that are enabling sexual misconduct within our ranks. We need to engage all of our members, because we know that their support and their contribution will be key to our long-term success.

Culture change must be a collaborative effort, and we all have a role to play. That is why we developed, in the fall, a comprehensive, long-term culture change strategy for preventing and addressing sexual misconduct, "The Path to Dignity and Respect", or simply known and referred to as "the Path". It is informed by and is sensitive to the experiences of those who have been affected by sexual misconduct in the CAF. It also draws on research, evidence and recommendations from subject matter experts and other stakeholders.

While the Path is by no means the final word on culture change in the CAF, it's a significant step in the right direction. We know that we have significant work to do to advance these efforts, but also to remedy past wrongs and to restore trust. We will listen, we will learn, and we will act.

At this time, Madam Chair, I'd be very happy to answer any questions that you may have.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Now we'll have Dr. Preston for five minutes.

Go ahead.

**Dr. Denise Preston (Executive Director, Sexual Misconduct Response Centre, Department of National Defence):** Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the committee.

Thank you for the invitation to speak with you today.

My name is Dr. Denise Preston, and I'm a forensic and clinical psychologist with over 30 years of experience dealing with harmful and criminal behaviour. I've been the executive director of the sexual misconduct response centre, or SMRC, since May 2017. I work with a team of dedicated professionals with a range of expertise in a variety of fields, including counselling, trauma, policy, prevention, perpetrators and research.

SMRC's mandate consists of three broad pillars: to provide support services to Canadian Armed Forces members who are affected by sexual misconduct; to provide expert advice on all aspects of sexual misconduct in the CAF, including policy, prevention, reporting and research; and to monitor the CAF's progress in addressing sexual misconduct. All of our counsellors who provide support are civilians who do not have the duty to report. The SMRC is committed to providing confidential and comprehensive support to any CAF member who reaches out and to ensuring that members feel safe, supported and heard.

Over and above our mandate, we are pleased to be leading the development of our restorative engagement program as part of the final settlement agreement related to sexual misconduct, as well as the development of a national survivor support strategy. Both of these initiatives are innovative, have the potential to be transformative and are informed by external subject matter experts as well as survivors.

As many of you know from my past experiences, I report directly to the deputy minister of national defence. As such, I'm independent of the chain of command and do not speak on behalf of the Canadian Armed Forces. However, my team and I do work closely with the CAF to ensure that we meet the needs of CAF members and the organization.

The SMRC has evolved significantly in the five years since its inception. Demand for our services and expertise has increased over these five years, and we have helped to shape various CAF policies and programs to respond to sexual misconduct.

Despite the work that has been done, there is undeniably more to do. We need to continue to foster meaningful culture change to address the sexualized culture. We need to enhance prevention programs to better target higher risk groups. We need to simplify reporting and make it safe for those who come forward. We need to promote processes and recourse mechanisms that are trauma informed and survivor centric. We also need to increase access to specialized care and support services. Of utmost importance is that we need to ensure that all of these efforts are informed by survivors.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here.

I look forward to your questions.

• (1235)

**The Chair:** Very good.

Thank you as well.

We will begin our first round of questions with Ms. Sahota for six minutes.

**Ms. Jag Sahota (Calgary Skyview, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for appearing here today and for your testimony.

General, you are the director general of professional military conduct, a recent new structure.

This past Tuesday we had the provost marshal appear before the committee. He informed us that he reports to the vice-chief of the defence staff, who in turn reports to the chief of the defence staff. He also insisted that his office and those under his command are independent.

However, there have been reports in the media of investigation by the CFNIS having been "interfered" with by senior officers. We understand that on paper the provost marshals are able to say they are independent. Given that they are ranked officers in the military and that there are media reports of interference with investigations, what would you recommend so that you not only can say they are independent, and also that they appear to the members of the military and Canadians as actually independent too?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** As you could well imagine, the provost marshal is probably best suited to answer that question.

The provost marshals exist independently from the chain of command. They adhere to Canadian police standards. They carry themselves and adhere to a strong standard that allows them to operate independently.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** General, you touched on this a bit. In your opinion, what would you hope to achieve in this role?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** In my role?

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Yes.

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** My role, as I indicated, is to reinforce the work that has been done by a lot of people who have got us to this point.

We can't lose sight of the fact that a lot of work and a lot of academic, personal and emotional investment have gone into developing Operation Honour to get it to this state we're at now. The release of the Path through the fall is a culmination of that effort. We need to carry on and continue to reinforce the great work that has resulted from that. It is very much focused on identifying those aspects of our culture that we need to reinforce, as well as identifying those things that have a toxic effect that we need to eliminate.

• (1240)

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** What measures will you take to ensure that the men and women in uniform are behaving in accordance with the code of service discipline?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** Everybody within the armed forces has a role to play in this. It doesn't matter whether you're at the strategic level or at the tactical level.

It's important that there's a requirement for adherence to the code of service discipline. The measures that we will take will be to continue to ensure that the chain of command is actively engaged in the process, and that leaders at every level understand where they fit and understand the role they play on unit culture and on culture change.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** In your opinion, does the code of service discipline reflect a clear and concise definition of paternalism, abuse of authority and sexual misconduct?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** Every number of years, the code of service discipline and the National Defence Act go through an independent review. That independent review is going on right now, and those sorts of things that have been brought up, Madam Chair, can form part of that analysis as we're going through it.

As we look at how we move forward with Operation Honour, some of those things that were identified that may in fact be barriers to reporting and that may in fact have been some of the negative aspects of where we thought we are will certainly be part of that process.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Like I said before, it's a recent new role. You have a structure that was created. Can you tell me a bit about why they decided to create this position?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** It's an evolution of the position. It began with the sexual misconduct response team that was stood up in 2015-16, and there has been a continuing evolving from there, but certainly, when I took over the responsibilities just after Labour Day, the intent was to look at all those broader parts of misconduct, not solely sexual misconduct, and to start looking at it in a much broader term and looking at the culture as a whole.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** What measures and policies will be in place to ensure progress is being made regarding misconduct?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** One of the biggest elements of the Path that we released in the fall was a performance measurement framework. That was identified through the Auditor General's report a number of years ago. A big part of that is the PMF, where we will look at how we have done. We'll continually measure ourselves.

When we released the Path, it was not meant to be a "one shot and then we're done". It was meant to be a continuous, concerted effort. Part of that was a method by which we measure how we are performing. That can come in a number of different ways, whether it's through reporting, unit surveys, unit command climate surveys, how we select our leaders and a number of different factors.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Would you like me to jump in here?

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Yes. Go ahead.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Specifically, how are you being measured and what outcomes do you need to deliver?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** Me personally in terms of my organization, Madam Chair?

Is that what you refer to?

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Yes.

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** It's important to understand that I work very collaboratively with a number of different stakeholders across the CAF, across the department and internal to our organization. We will be measured on how we get these policies out, how we work with those organizations and, more importantly, how we are getting the message down to the various command teams all across the CAF, from the strategic to the tactical level.

**The Chair:** Very good.

We'll now go to Ms. Sidhu for six minutes.

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

Thank you to our witnesses for appearing before our committee. We appreciate the work that you both do within your respective departments.

My first question is for you, Dr. Preston. Can you elaborate on the mandate of the SMRC and the necessity of its services?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** As I mentioned, the mandate has three broad lines of effort.

The first and most important is to provide a range of support services for members who are affected by sexual misconduct. The second is to provide a range of policy advice: advice on the content of prevention programs, on research programs and things like that. The third one is to monitor CAF's implementation of Operation Honour efforts.

Those are the three broad pillars of our mandate.

• (1245)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Where can CAF members access your services? Is there one central base or are there multiple centres across Canada?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** At present we are a centralized service so we have a 1-800 number, as well as a website for people to contact us by email if they so choose. We are in the process of developing plans to expand our services into regional centres.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** How have the services provided since 2015 informed the growth and development of the centre?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** Certainly, as I mentioned in my opening comments, the demand for our services has increased steadily year over year. The volume of calls that we get has certainly increased over time, and in the last couple of months, as you can imagine.

We use that information to inform the development, the expansion or the refinement of our services. For example, we use the data we've collected over the last five years to do an analysis to help us plan for the regional expansion to look at particular regions or locations that perhaps ought to be prioritized over other locations.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Can you address how the centre addresses military sexual trauma, both as support services and as research for policy change. What was the impact of the pandemic during this time?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** With regard to how the centre addresses military sexual trauma as a support service, we provide the same range of support services to anyone who calls us, regardless of the type of incident that's happened to them or the severity of the impacts that people are experiencing.

We make appropriate referrals with the member's consent, so if they simply want information from us, we provide that. If their needs are physical, psychological or spiritual, we would, with the member's consent, make the appropriate referral so they get access to the type of specialized care they need to address the extent or the impact of their symptoms.

In terms of research for policy change, we are well connected to the research branch of the Canadian Armed Forces, so we definitely contribute research projects to that research program. We review, for example, policies or programs related to sexual misconduct to provide advice on considerations that need to be taken in account to ensure that they're trauma-informed, that they're survivor-centred and that they address the range of needs.

We're also currently developing a national survivor support strategy, which would also take into consideration the range of needs that those who experience military sexual trauma need to have addressed.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you, Dr. Preston.

Like women and male members of the LGBTQ community, visible minorities and indigenous members of the armed forces also experience sexual misconduct and other forms of harassment. Can you speak to how the armed forces are able to address these issues from the intersectional point of view?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** Is that question for me or for General Atherton?

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Dr. Preston, if you could give the answer, and then if the general could add to that, that would be good.

**Dr. Denise Preston:** You are absolutely correct that the two Statistics Canada surveys that have been done absolutely identify that members of the groups you've identified experience sexual misconduct at higher rates than other groups. You're absolutely correct that men are also victims of sexual misconduct.

How we take this into consideration in our work is that we consult with the stakeholders, the representatives of the defence advisory groups for all these groups of individuals, to ensure that our work is appropriately informed to meet the needs of these individuals.

We seek the input of subject matter experts with these types of expertise; hence, currently on a consultation group we have someone who specializes in working with men. We also have someone who specializes in indigenous issues. We always strive to ensure that we have appropriate consultants advising all of the work that we do.

● (1250)

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

We will now go to Madame Larouche.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor for six minutes.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Brigadier-General Atherton and Ms. Preston, thank you very much for the work you are doing.

My first question is for you, Brigadier-General Atherton. You mentioned Judge Deschamps' report.

Can you provide an update on the status of the work surrounding the implementation of the 10 recommendations outlined in that report? As of 2019, seven of these recommendations had not yet been fully initiated.

[*English*]

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** When we released the Path in the fall—and shortly afterwards there was the policy document that very clearly outlined the duties and responsibilities related to sexual misconduct—from our perspective that answered all 10 of Madame Deschamps' recommendations, as well as the recommendations of the OAG. We have made a lot of progress since 2019. In that time, since 2019, the final work would have gone into the release of the Path. From our perspective, we believe we have achieved all 10 of those recommendations. However, that is our opinion. We still require our audit committee to look at it and confirm our understanding of it.

Again, a lot of work has been done since 2019 to get us to that point of releasing that strategy, particularly in getting expert opinion and external advice to make sure that what we were releasing had expert informed care and a victim-centric approach that was aimed at culture change.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** All right.

Brigadier-General Atherton, last Tuesday, the Canadian Forces provost marshal was explaining to us that in order for an investigation to be launched, a complaint must cross a certain threshold. What are the criteria for crossing that threshold?

Ms. Preston could also speak to this process for victims.

[*English*]

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** We have taken a very broad definition of what sexual misconduct is, right up to, as we heard from the last panel, the criminal. But to preserve the integrity and the independence of the military police branch, they are allowed a certain amount of latitude to look at the evidence. Given that they have that authority, they determine whether it is or isn't a code of service discipline offence or whether it warrants a charge in accordance with the Criminal Code of Canada.

Every case is slightly different. Again, it depends on the professionalism and dedication of those individuals who investigate those incidents.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Ms. Preston, what are the differences between the military justice system and the public system in the way sexual assaults are handled?

From what we were hearing earlier, it sounds like the definition is the same, but is there a difference between the military and civilian systems in terms of handling?

[English]

**Dr. Denise Preston:** The first thing I should note is that the sexual misconduct response centre is not a reporting centre. We do have a military police liaison officer who is a member of the national investigation service who works with us. We are able to facilitate reporting with the consent of an individual who calls us. We do not actually take reports at the SMRC.

What I would note about definitions is that, as General Atherton has said, the CAF uses a very broad definition of sexual misconduct. It goes up to and including cases that would meet Criminal Code definitions for sexual assault or other types of sexual offences.

• (1255)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Fine.

Ms. Preston, as I understand it, your centre simply serves as a resource for victim support, but is not necessarily involved in the rest of the process.

Brigadier-General Atherton, is there a difference in the handling of a sexual assault complaint in the military and civilian justice systems?

[English]

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** Madam Chair, I believe the provost marshal or somebody from the JAG organization would be much better positioned to answer that with specifics, but I will say that we do have a very broad definition of what sexual misconduct is. As I've said, it goes right up to criminal...but it also targets those sorts of inappropriate behaviours that are more or less minor—if I can use those terms—because those are the ones that we believe, if left unchecked, can lead to more serious types of behaviour.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Perhaps we can come back to this.

Depending on how sexual misconduct is defined and the hierarchical level of the person committing it, there are still barriers.

Are you aware of the barriers military members face in reporting sexual misconduct?

**The Chair:** Your time is up, Ms. Larouche.

[English]

Now we'll go to Ms. Mathysen for six minutes.

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

To the witnesses, one of the reasons we're discussing all of this is ultimately that, in a horrible situation, the ombudsman had approached the Minister of Defence not knowing where to go with an allegation, and the ombudsman was unwilling to release the complainant's information because that complainant had no assurances they would be protected from doing so in their chain of command.

We've heard a lot from witnesses directly saying that confidentiality doesn't exist. One witness, Madame Raymond, told us about hearing people talking about her case in the hallway when they weren't speaking to her directly.

I know, Ms. Preston, you talked about confidentiality and its importance, but there seems to be a disconnect here.

Can you both address that?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** Certainly. I can start.

All of the services we provide at the SMRC are confidential. We are the one safe space that CAF members have to call to talk about what's happened to them, knowing that we are receiving that information and keeping it in confidence until such time as they decide they would like to take action with that information.

In practice, we would only release information about any individual caller with their consent or when the usual limits to confidentiality apply, such as if there's imminent risk to an individual, but I can say that has never happened in the six years the centre has been operating.

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** We have a significant number of policies in place to protect an individual who comes forward with a complaint. It's been very clearly articulated in the policy document we released in the fall. The amount of personal and moral courage that an individual must have to come forward to make a complaint of this nature is beyond my comprehension, I know, but having been a commanding officer and a formation commander, I know how challenging and how difficult that is.

That said, we do have a number of policies that are there to protect the individual, but part of the work we need to do going forward is to understand what those barriers are. A part of the work and the successes that we've worked through via Operation Honour is to try to eliminate those barriers and provide a number of different options. However, as we've seen and heard, there are barriers that exist. We need to work through them and need to find out what they are, but certainly, there is a rigid system in place to protect the individual and to protect them from any form of repercussion.

The peer group and the bystander will also play a significant role here in what they need to do or what role they will play, certainly as a member of their team, and to protect the member of their team as well.

There's a lot more work to do in this regard, particularly in understanding what those barriers are to reporting, and what those barriers would be to make an individual concerned or scared to come forward when they clearly have something they need to say.

• (1300)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** You were talking about those policies and the idea of that confidentiality being supreme, and earlier this week in testimony this committee also heard that there is a difference between the formal and informal leadership. It seems like we're talking about a lot of the same things here, right? There are the policies on the books and in the leadership that can be provided formally in terms of education and in terms of what we say. Even the last panel talked about what we say and what we do.

Maybe you could discuss that as well in terms of that formal and informal leadership and some of the recommendations you would have to increase both protection and confidentiality for women, all minorities or disproportionately affected groups going forward within the CAF.

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** Madam Chair, I'll make the first attempt at this.

Part of our culture change strategy is very much the effect, exactly as you've said. We have the very clear, mapped out and clearly published "what we expect our core values to be", and also, we have identified that there is, in some cases, a variation from those things.

The other part of this is targeting those junior leaders, and leaders at every level, quite frankly, and understanding the role they will play in establishing command climate and culture within their organization. Part of this is very much educating leaders at every level to understand how significant an effect they have and the significant effect that they may have on barriers to reporting.

Also, part of the work that we will start looking for as part of this culture change is for every member of the CAF to understand where they fit in the whole process, where they see themselves, and to understand that they are in fact part of this process to change culture in understanding the effect it has on individuals who are harmed and the role they must play in ensuring they have the care they need.

**The Chair:** Now we'll go to Ms. Alleslev in the second round for five minutes.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

General Atherton, you can tell that my colleagues are struggling somewhat with the actual responsibility and role of your position. Could you give us an idea of what authority and accountability you have and what are the key objectives that your position is working to achieve?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** Thank you very much for that very good question.

I am an element within the office of the CDS, as it were, but my day-to-day reporting is directly to the vice-chief. I have the opportunity and the ability to work with all of the different services to work through the programs that we are trying to put in place. Part of my original mandate, or my expanded mandate, is to look at all those aspects of culture that we need and what we want to be the embodiment of what Canada wants as members of the armed forces.

That is my mandate, and it's also to put policies into play that support those types of things. Also, part of it is to work with professionals like Dr. Preston, to work with our external stakeholders and to work with experts to understand: Are the policies that we have put in place effective? Where can we do better and how can we improve? Particularly as we move on to the next step of this journey, where can we help and what can we do better? That's really part of my mandate: to work with the chain of command but also to work with external stakeholders to provide that expert advice that we so need.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** The key, of course, is around the metrics. You've said that you've made steady progress. How do you know that? How are you measuring that progress?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** We measure progress in a number of different ways. A lot of it is through reporting: the numbers of reporting and how we track that, and the accuracy of reporting. We have a very dedicated reporting system and we track incidents throughout the course of the year. We work with the chain of command for accuracy. We work with them for auditing and provide them feedback and advice on how they can be better. It's that accuracy of reporting that will help us to determine the rate of increase or decrease or change on the reporting of sexual misconduct.

We also will work with things like StatsCan surveys, unit surveys and things like that to understand what command climates are out there and to then be able to work with some of the academic bodies we have to understand that and to help us better understand what the results are so that then we can design programs to fit.

● (1305)

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** We've seen that much of these policies and procedures have been in place for a long time. The military had SHARP training back in the 1990s, and there's Operation Honour. This is not a new thing. It's not necessarily a question of the military's not understanding what's expected and what the values of Canadian society are; it's about individuals not meeting that behaviour.

How are you measuring that, and how are you measuring the accountability of those individuals in those processes so they meet standards for behaviour?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** We have said that sexual misconduct must never be minimized, excused or ignored. That is paramount through everything that we do.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** However, we know that it has been, so how are we addressing this?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** Absolutely. That's exactly why, as we move through the next step of this journey, we need to understand not only what we did well, what the successes are and what the positive aspects of Operation Honour were, but also where we went wrong and what some of the negative aspects of it were.

What we're also seeing is part of the aspect of the Path—understanding that culture change and our ethos are very much embedded into our education and training systems. This starts right at the recruit school and works its way through leadership training, junior leadership training, officer training and senior leader training. We understand that this is an important part of operational effectiveness and want to make people an essential part of our team.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Will you be reviewing the practices at RMC? We've heard from witnesses that it obviously has an incredibly strong culture. You and I were both there 100 years ago.

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** Part of my role is to work with other stakeholders, including the military colleges. I look at their training and education systems. We have a training and education organization within my directorate that works with the Canadian Defence Academy to make sure they're putting in place all these training and education systems we want and that they're in line with the Path and with Operation Honour.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** We have great confidence in you and wish you great success.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, but that's it for your time.

Now we'll go to Ms. Dhillon, for five minutes.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to our witnesses for their very compelling testimony today.

I'll start with Dr. Preston.

The SMRC offers policy recommendations, and one highlighted issue is the duty to report. Recently, the acting chief of the defence staff discussed at committee changing the words "duty to report" to "duty to respond".

Dr. Preston, based on your research, why do you think this change is so crucial and why is it being received so well by survivors and advocates? What is the significance of this word change?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** The duty to report has been a significant issue for us at the SMRC, for a variety of expert stakeholders who have provided advice over the years and for survivors themselves. Effectively, the duty to report disempowers victims and survivors because it removes all agency from them in deciding whether they want to report what's happened to them, when they want to report and to whom they want to report. One thing the statistics show is that of all the reports of sexual assault that are made to the chain of command, 40% are made by third parties. That has a really significant impact on survivors, so the duty to report has a significant impact on survivors.

Really what we're looking for in a policy is sufficient latitude to provide exemptions so that certain people are not held to the duty to report. For example, health care providers and the victims should not be subject to the duty to report. What we're also looking for in policy, when third party reports are made, is that it still goes back to the victim: We inform them that this has happened and we do not move forward in responding until the victim chooses that they want this to go forward.

It would be a significant change for the survivor community if the duty to report could be more effectively addressed.

• (1310)

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** In your opening statement you spoke about the need for meaningful cultural change. We know there is a very highly sexualized culture, a very toxic environment, in the CAF. To bring about this change do you think it's also important to understand why the perpetrators do what they do? I'm trying to understand this, and I asked the honourable justice who testified before us a few weeks ago what makes somebody behave toward another person in this manner? Somebody whose duty is to swear to protect others is out there harassing and assaulting them. Can you please explain what could compel somebody to do this and what we could do to understand this to bring about meaningful cultural change?

Thank you.

**Dr. Denise Preston:** It's an important question, but I want to preface it by saying that sometimes people react when we talk about perpetrators because they think that in talking about perpetra-

tors we're negating the impact of culture. That is absolutely not the case. This is a very complex problem that requires intervention at multiple levels—at the individual level, but also at the cultural and the organizational level.

If you look at people who commit this kind of behaviour, there are many different risk factors or things that cause them to behave the way they do. There are certainly individual factors in attitudes, values, beliefs, use of alcohol...there's a range of things about the individual. But they commit these behaviours within a culture and within a context, so if there is a sexualized, permissive culture, a culture of silence, it emboldens them and protects them from accountability as well.

We do need to do a better job of understanding who is doing this within the CAF because we do not have a good understanding of who is doing it, why they're doing it, who they're doing it to and under what circumstances. That is critical to being able to design better prevention programs and response programs as well.

It is important to make sure there are effective responses to hold individual perpetrators accountable. If they actually see tangible evidence of individuals being held appropriately accountable, that will go a long way to making people trust in the system, but we also need to ensure that changes are made within the environment so it is no longer a permissive one that enables or promotes this type of behaviour to happen.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we will go to Madame Larouche.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche, you have two and a half minutes.

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

I would like to ask Brigadier-General Atherton my question.

In your opening remarks, you talked about the end of Operation Honour. I'd like to hear from you on that.

How do you see Operation Honour continuing? Do you have any ideas?

[*English*]

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** It is important to understand what we mean by culminating. From a military operation perspective, it means it's got to its logical point and that it doesn't matter how many more resources we put at this, because we cannot advance it anymore. We've seen the events of the last number of months. A significant amount of negativity is now associated with that, so it's come to the point that we need to look at something else and need to develop our next approach.

As we look at this, how we close out Operation Honour will be just as important as how we brought it into being. A significant amount of emotion is tied to this, both good and bad. We also need to really look at the successes we've had. We've heard a number of them today. We've made a significant amount of progress in the last number of years. We have a significant amount of education and training programs in place. There is a lot of institutional knowledge about it.

We also have to look at where we didn't do well. We need to look at some of the unintended consequences of these programs. We also need to look at what those barriers were and to talk to the people who were most affected by this to understand what we need to do. Certainly these last number of months and the situation we're in has identified what we don't know. We need to talk to our people, listen to our people, engage with our people to understand how we can move forward and how we can be a much more effective force and be the embodiment of everything that Canadians expect of us.

• (1315)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** That's fine.

Dr. Preston, you talked about trauma and the importance of considering it in the healing process for victims.

So when we talk about post-traumatic stress disorder, could it be more...

[English]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. You're out of time on this one.

We'll go to Ms. Mathysen for two and a half minutes.

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

General Atherton, you said earlier that between 2015 and 2019 you worked very hard to put forward the changes to meet all of the recommendations listed by the Deschamps report, and yet I find a disconnect—a word I've used a lot—because we heard directly from Madame Deschamps just a few weeks ago, who stated clearly that she didn't feel those recommendations had been met. Could you talk about why that could be or about why there is that disconnect, so I can better understand it?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** As we worked through the development of the Path and the policy document, we worked with external stakeholders like Madame Deschamps and others to try to better understand and have a victim-centric approach. As we went through, we released the Path to stakeholders in draft format for them to look at and provide their feedback. For the most part, we had endorsement of what we were doing. There were a number of different recommendations for changes that we have implemented.

Now it comes out to an external organization, our defence audit committee, who will look at that. They will really determine from an external perspective, from an audit perspective, whether in fact we as a department, as an armed forces, have achieved those 10 recommendations. It's our perspective as we release that document that, yes, we have done the 10 recommendations, but to be valid and to be accurate, we need an external piece that will look at it.

I believe that will probably handle, to some extent, some of the disconnect that you're talking about.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** So you'll definitely take into account the fact that the author of the report doesn't necessarily believe they have been met. I am a bit confused, because I had asked Madame Deschamps directly if she had been consulted directly. She said that she hadn't. You're saying that you did work with her directly since the release of the report. Could you clarify that a little bit as well?

**BGen Andrew Atherton:** As we worked through the process to get the Path up and running and released, it took a number of years. There were a number of different stakeholders involved. Certainly, in the final days, just before release, we worked with Madame Deschamps and gave her a copy of it and went through it with her to explain what it was and everything along those lines.

Again, a lot of that work that happened was previous to my time. Certainly, I can only comment on what we did in the final days to get it out into the public eye.

**The Chair:** All right.

Ms. Shin, you have five minutes.

**Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC):** I'd like to thank both witnesses for joining us today. These are difficult conversations. I applaud you for showing up and speaking with moral courage.

Dr. Preston, the sexual misconduct response centre's mandate is to provide services to military personnel who have been the victim of sexual assault or misconduct. Are you automatically notified when someone files a complaint, or does the victim need to seek you out?

• (1320)

**Dr. Denise Preston:** We are not automatically notified when a victim makes a complaint. Victims need to reach out to us, to call us. It's therefore very important that we engage in ongoing outreach to raise awareness and to make sure that the people who the victims might actually interact with at the unit level are aware of the SMRC and will refer them to us as sort of a first response.

So no, we're not automatically informed of all complaints. As I mentioned, people very often will call us not because they want to make a complaint but because they want to talk about what happened to them. In some cases, they're not even sure if what happened to them was a form of sexual misconduct. We're there to listen and to validate what happened to them and to provide whatever information, support or referrals they might require.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** It's great that your services are accessible.

On that note, the part about second-guessing about whether something was a reality or not and some of the gaslighting that's in the culture there, what does some of your outreach look like in trying to help women come forward and not feel like they need to second-guess?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** We tend to send teams out. We have a sort of three-year outreach plan whereby we travel to all of the bases and wings across the country in that time frame. We send out a team. That team comprises some of our counsellors, and there is always a member of the management team. As well, we have a military liaison officer who goes on those outreach sessions with us. While we're there, we deliver a number of different group sessions with people. Typically, the sessions are divided by rank. We also meet with all of the command teams to talk about the services we provide.

What I can say to you is that every single time we've gone out and done outreach, we've had at least one person—if not more—hang around and talk to us and actually disclose an incident. Typically after a visit, for the first couple of weeks after we've been at a particular site, we receive an increase in the number of calls from that particular site as well. The outreach definitely pays dividends in putting faces to names for people.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Thank you so much for doing that. That is so valuable.

Recently, the committee heard from Ms. Raymond, whose experience is well known. She told us that one of the challenges she faced as a francophone was the inability to access these services in French.

Canada is a bilingual country where Canadians have the right to expect and receive services in their language of choice, whether that is English or French. Can you please inform us of the steps you take to ensure these obligations are met?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Absolutely, all of the members of my counselling team are fully bilingual. Therefore, for members across the country, and across the world, in fact, because we offer 24-7 services, there are always fully bilingual people who will respond to the calls. Actually, Quebec will be one of the regions that we expand to and provide regional services.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** That's great.

Dr. Preston, in a recent media article, you stated that complaints against senior leaders of the Canadian Armed Forces are a sign of progress, not failure, but the fact that those allegations are being raised in the media, rather than directly to the military, shows there is a lack of trust in the reporting process among the ranks.

You also made mention of your concern that the SMRC isn't truly independent because your budget is still tied to the Department of National Defence and that the military doesn't provide you with all of the necessary information requested.

Do you believe that in order to properly address and handle sexual misconduct and assaults a truly independent body outside of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces is needed to gain the trust of our military personnel and to truly address the culture within the military?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** Regardless of what sort of mechanism is set up, whether it's for support or for reporting and investigation, I think what is of fundamental importance is that it's in the best interests of survivors. That's what we need to take as our starting point

in designing—or perhaps redesigning—some of the structures that we already have.

What I can tell you with respect to reporting is that the two biggest complaints we hear from survivors are about the duty to report, which we've already talked about, and all of the negative effects of that on members, but also, the other thing they ask for is an ability to make a report that is outside of the chain of command, specifically outside of their own chain of command. What they're looking for is an independent reporting entity and an independent investigative entity.

● (1325)

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we'll go to Ms. Vandenbeld for the last five minutes.

**Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much.

I'll be directing my questions to you, Dr. Preston. Thank you so much for the work you do at the SMRC.

I'm going to ask you a very open-ended question. In an ideal world, if resources were not in question, how would you expand the SMRC? What would you see as its ideal role, mandate and resources? What would you like to see?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** If resources were not a question, again I would take as my starting point a comprehensive set of supports and services for members that best meets their needs. That needs to start with hearing from survivors themselves about what it is they want. If that turns out to be SMRC or something else, that's fine. I'm not wedded to a particular structure. I'm wedded to what's in the best interest of members.

Ideally what I would like to see is a culture whose sexualized nature is addressed, where people feel they're included and respected and incidents are appropriately prevented, but if incidents do happen, there be accessible care regardless of where the member is. Therefore, I would like to see decentralized services. I would like them feel safe coming forward to report.

We definitely have to look at things like the duty to report, whether there's an option for independent reporting of an investigation and whether they're free from reprisal as well, so when members do make a report, they have an advocate or a source of support that accompanies them from the time they come forward until such time as they don't need that support anymore to be able to support and address reprisals in real time.

That is a range of things I would like to see in place.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Looking more broadly than the SMRC—you've been following this discussion very closely, I know, in both committees and also a number of discussions that are happening at Defence—what would be some key recommendations you would have for the Defence team that may not have already been mentioned in this committee, or what are the key gaps you see we need to put forward to find solutions for this?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** There is a range of things that need to happen, but one of the important things to think about is the approach that is taken to address some of the gaps and issues. What I've seen and certainly what I've experienced in the last number of years that I've worked on this file is that it's very reactive. We're constantly directing our efforts to the crisis of the day or the issue of the day and what has arisen, without stepping back and taking a more strategic or comprehensive view of the issue and making sure that we look at processes from beginning to end with a survivor lens to really look at where the gaps or the issues are at every single part of a process in order to make sure there is consistent, trauma-informed, survivor-centred support or response from beginning to end.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** What about intersectionality? We know that not everybody experiences it the same, and there might be different needs for racialized or LGBTQ members. Is there enough data or research on intersectionality?

**Dr. Denise Preston:** At present there is not a huge amount of data. There is some information that was in both of the StatsCan reports. However, the need for further information on the experiences of these intersectional groups has been raised with the CAF's research department, which is currently either developing or conducting studies. I'm not quite sure where they're at, but they are looking at very focused studies, looking at members from all of these various groups to better understand their experience and their needs.

• (1330)

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Often we know that when people come forward, it's not immediately a case of, "I want an investigation. I

want punitive measures against the perpetrator". Often it's a series of stages the survivor goes through, starting with maybe needing counselling, then perhaps peer support, then perhaps other steps, and at that point she might be ready to say, "Yes, I want to formally report a complaint".

How does SMRC assist the survivors to get from the various different stages and the various different needs they may have over the course of time?

**The Chair:** Answer quickly, in a few seconds, please.

**Dr. Denise Preston:** That's exactly what SMRC does, either by referring people to the appropriate support services or through our own response and support coordination service, where members are assigned a single point of contact at SMRC and we support them throughout their journey. Members define what their journey is. We are not leading them to reporting. We're leading them or supporting them to access what they want, but once they decide they're ready to report, we help facilitate that as well, including accompanying them.

**The Chair:** Very good.

I want to thank both of our witnesses today for your leadership and patience, and for staying late.

Now for the rest of the committee, is it the will of the committee to adjourn?

Seeing that it is, I shall see you then on Tuesday at our next meeting on this subject.

Thank you so much.





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