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## **Standing Committee on National Defence**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, September 29, 2016**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Stephen Fuhr**



## Standing Committee on National Defence

Thursday, September 29, 2016

•(1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)):** Welcome, everybody.

Hopefully the others will show up here shortly.

Today we have Lieutenant-General Christine Whitecross and Rear-Admiral Jennifer Bennett to give us an update on sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. Thank you very much for coming on short notice to appear before the committee today.

I understand there have been a couple of updates since the Deschamps report of 2015, one very recently, in August.

Before I give you the floor, General Whitecross, I'll say to the committee that I'm going to save 10 minutes at the end for committee business. We'll have testimony, questions, and then committee business.

General Whitecross, you have the floor.

[Translation]

**Lieutenant-General Christine Whitecross (Commander, Military Personnel Command, Department of National Defence):** Mr. Chair, committee members, thank you for this invitation to appear before the Committee on National Defence and update you on the Canadian armed forces' response to the problem of harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

[English]

Joining me today is Rear-Admiral Jennifer Bennett, who is leading the Canadian Armed Forces strategic response team on sexual misconduct.

I addressed this committee on this issue on May 25, 2015, less than a month following our receipt of former Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps's seminal report and recommendations. At that time I mapped out the initial actions that the Canadian Armed Forces were undertaking, or intended to quickly undertake, to address this insidious problem, as well as our intent to focus on four main areas in developing a solution: understanding the problem, responding to it, supporting those affected by it, and ultimately preventing it.

I'm pleased to report that we have made significant progress since that time, and at the end of August we released our second progress report outlining the efforts of the six previous months as well as our challenges in mitigating strategies on the way ahead.

Mr. Chair, as you well know, General Vance has made this issue one of his top priorities. He launched Operation Honour, the

overarching endeavour aimed at eliminating harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour within our institution. A focal point of Operation Honour is the implementation of all 10 of the recommendations in Madam Deschamps's report, though the efforts are not limited to those.

The objective is clear: to eliminate harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour in order to ensure the dedicated men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces are treated with dignity and respect in a workplace free from harassment and discrimination. Delivering more effective support to victims remains Operation Honour's first objective.

Last September the sexual misconduct response centre, the SMRC, was established independently from the military chain of command to provide Canadian Armed Forces members affected by sexual misconduct with an additional confidential and unique support option. One of the attributes that makes the centre different is that it allows victims to speak to counsellors while deciding whether or not to pursue a formal complaint.

•(1105)

[Translation]

We know that fear of adverse effects and a lack of knowledge or trust in the system are considered impediments to victim reporting, and we continue to overcome these barriers. Plus we have seen an increase of 22% of incidents reported to the military police in the first six months of this year.

[English]

About half of these are cold cases predating Operation Honour. This demonstrates to us that some of these victims now believe, perhaps for the very first time, that we will hear them and we will actually take action. Important enhancements are under way within the military police branch and the Judge Advocate General to improve victim support as well as investigations and prosecutions.

On Tuesday of this week we announced and launched our new sexual offence response teams composed of specially trained investigators located at bases and wings across the country. Every report, every sexual offence, new or historical, will be investigated by these dedicated teams within the Canadian Forces national investigative services. Independently of Operation Honour, military judicial processes are also being reviewed and assessed with victim support as a central theme for this work.

Measuring progress is pivotal in determining the impact of our efforts. While the number of reports, investigations, charges, and convictions is an important performance measure, it is ultimately the Canadian Armed Forces members who will determine the extent of our success and the organizational culture change that it delivers.

This past spring, at our request Statistics Canada conducted a survey of regular force and primary reserve members to specifically address the incidence of and response to harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Over 40,000 of our members completed the survey, and the results will be released at the end of November.

[Translation]

We expect that these results will be very revealing and they will provide us with the valuable information we need to better understand the scope and nature of sexual misconduct in the military context. We also believe we will learn about areas to target for successful culture change and understand the challenges our members face.

[English]

The responsibility and accountability of every member to live up to the values of respect and honour upheld by the Canadian Armed Forces is the cornerstone of a culture change being generated by Operation Honour. This is a long-term endeavour and one of the most difficult leadership challenges an organization can undertake.

We know that we are only at the very beginning of a very long and complex journey; however, we are seeing evidence of change generated at all levels of the institution. Momentum is building. Our challenge today is to maintain it.

The Canadian Armed Forces must protect and care for its members. We must be an employer of choice, despite the reality of sending people in harm's way. We should be respected not only for what we accomplish, but for what the Canadian Armed Forces is and what we represent. This can only be sustained if the institution diligently works to ensure a professional environment of dignity, respect, and the elimination of sexual misconduct.

The chief of the defence staff, General Vance, and my fellow institutional leaders are encouraged by the progress achieved to date, but we are not completely satisfied. Much work remains, and despite the early progress and changes within our institution, incidents of harmful sexual behaviour and sexual offences continue to occur. This is why Operation Honour remains a top priority across the Canadian Armed Forces.

The institution will be judged, not on promises and plans, but on our demonstrated ability to deliver the cultural change that Operation Honour intends to achieve.

[Translation]

That is why we remain deeply committed to ensuring a dignified, respectful and professional environment to all Canadians who choose to serve their country, and why in the eyes of all the members of the Canadian Forces, Operation HONOUR is a no-fail mission.

• (1110)

[English]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, General Whitecross.

Before we take our first question, I want to congratulate you on your recent appointment to the NATO college in Rome. We're all very proud of you.

Thank you.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Thank you very much. It's very exciting.

**The Chair:** Our first question is going to go to Mr. Spengemann. You have seven minutes.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, General Whitecross and Admiral Bennett. Thank you both for your service, for your leadership, for being here today, and most importantly, for engaging on this very important topic.

I want to put to you the idea that investigation, discipline, and victim support are tremendously important components of the project overall, but they are what we might consider the downstream components that happen when something bad has occurred.

You mentioned culture change. About an hour ago, I had the opportunity to introduce my private member's bill in the House of Commons. It's an act to create gender equality week in Canada. It's a bill for which I'm looking for feedback, and ultimately support from the Canadian Forces as it goes forward.

I wonder if you could take the lens of gender equality, which is something maybe more diffused, but certainly upstream of sexual misconduct and sexual violence, and illuminate the committee and Canada as a nation a little bit on the culture that is currently in place in the Canadian Forces that we need to change; the subtleties that would facilitate sexual misconduct, sexual violence, and ultimately all the things that we report on and try to correct.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Mr. Chair, I'm going to provide some of the answers to the questions, and then I'll defer to Jennifer Bennett, who is working the issues on a day-to-day basis.

First of all, a week as you have so illustrated or characterized would certainly be supported by the Canadian Armed Forces. General Vance has made it one of his priorities besides Operation Honour to increase the diversity numbers within the Canadian Armed Forces, and that is certainly one of my objectives as well.

In so doing, we're talking about cultural change, which will take a generation or more, as you can appreciate. In addition to that, we're trying to, as you have alluded to, bring out the behavioural change in the short term. Behavioural change in the short term will lead to cultural change in the long term. Institutionally, we must create the environment where culture change or behavioural change will be sustaining and enduring.

This speaks to policies, training, education, and a marked change in probably how we treat people when it comes to men and women, people of different sexual orientations, and different cultures, actually, if we can put it to that extent.

The work we're doing on the institutional side, which is very much process driven, which is very much going to create that environment, is ongoing. Admiral Bennett could speak a little bit more on that.

I would also like to mention that gender-based analysis has to be a part of our processes as we're moving forward. General Vance has identified Major-General Tammy Harris as the gender-based analysis champion for the Canadian Armed Forces. We're taking the lead on that to look at our policies to ensure there is no gender bias in our policies as we're moving forward, and that we're looking at them in a very structured and pragmatic way.

Putting that all together, our belief is that this will help to bring us to a sustained cultural change, and much of that has already been started.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** General, before we hear from Admiral Bennett, is it fair to say that aside from the policies, which are very much going in the right direction as I see it, there isn't at the moment among our serving women and men a presumption of gender equality across functions in the Canadian Forces? That's still not something that's culturally established, or is that too general a statement?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** I think that's too general a statement. Personally, I believe I get treated as a peer based on my rank, my experience, and background level. I would like to think that is the case for all, but I'm not naive enough to believe that, so we do have work to do there.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** Admiral Bennett, would you like to comment as well?

**Rear-Admiral Jennifer Bennett (Director General, Canadian Armed Forces Strategic Response Team On Sexual Misconduct, Department of National Defence):** I would address your last question first. There's a difference between gender equality and equity, and while we don't have the same balance of male members with the Canadian Armed Forces and female members, there are some differences in why people choose to join the Canadian Armed Forces. There is a propensity to join factor, and we share that challenge across a number of occupations that have been traditionally male dominated.

I would also add we do have pay parity benefit. We do have a number of programs that are exactly the same for men and women, which is not the case across other occupations. It is difficult to answer the question about gender equality if you're simply looking at numbers.

Certainly, our programs, and the way we treat individuals, are very gender neutral. In our physical fitness standards, we've gone to one standard for all, so that it applies to members of the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure we are fit for operations. There are no different standards for men than there are for women.

In terms of the cultural change and with your specific reference to gender considerations, Operation Honour touches on a number of other large projects across the department. General Whitecross mentioned diversity. We continue to work on our ethics and ethos, our programs of leadership, and gender considerations on operations as part of the UN security resolution and NATO work.

We are engaged across a number of initiatives that are gender related, and I'm excited as well to hear about the opportunity to celebrate gender equality week, and the role we can play in that.

• (1115)

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** I would like to look at the two separate stages in the process of entering and serving in the Canadian Forces. What messaging with respect to gender equality is taking place at the recruitment stage and in our military colleges?

I know that doesn't leave a lot of time, but if you could just briefly address it, maybe we can circle back to it.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** There are two parts to that question. One, we're trying to increase our diversity numbers. That is one of our ultimate aims in the next number of years, and the CDS has made our stated aim 1% per year for the next 10 years, so we can increase our target numbers from Human Resources Canada up to 25% in the next decade.

In order to do that, we are creating the environment at the recruiting centres before they even get to the military colleges and the recruit school in Saint-Jean. We're trying to engage more women, specifically women, but also people of visible minorities and our aboriginal colleagues. We're trying to engage them more, to tell them of the benefits that exist within the Canadian Armed Forces, and to expand upon them because we found in our public opinion research that women generally didn't understand what it meant to be a military member, and to do far more education at the grassroots level.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** Thank you for that.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor.

[*Translation*]

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

Madam Lieutenant-General Whitecross and Madam Rear-Admiral Bennett, we are talking about behaviour and environment, but what are the primary causes of actual cases of harassment or assault?

I was a member of the Canadian Forces for more than 20 years, and I was unit commander. So I had to manage such problems at the time. I began to serve at the end of the 1980s, during the transition. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was implemented more actively and women were integrated into combat zones. At the time, this was a man's world, but they then had to deal with the presence of women in the infantry, the artillery, and combat zones. This created a change of culture.

Is there an increase in the number of assault cases today? If so, is there a link between that increase and the behaviour and culture of young people today, who live in a society that is more permissive than it was at that time?

I would also like to know whether the imposition of discipline in the Canadian Forces has changed. At a certain point, members of the military could not do anything out of line without the imposition of very strict disciplinary measures. Has discipline changed? Are NCOs less strict today toward military members, an attitude which could lead to bad behaviour?

• (1120)

[English]

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Thanks very much, sir. There are quite a few questions in there. I will take them one at a time.

When it comes to a sexualized culture, the reality is that the Canadian Armed Forces aren't the only people who have this type of behaviour that we're trying to address. It exists in civil society, universities, and colleges across the country, not to mention other government departments and our allies. It is a severe issue, as well, that is facing our allies, and we discuss best practices as much as possible with the countries and with organizations within Canada.

The reality is that we are bringing young people who are part of that society into our organization, and we need to inculcate in them what it means to be a military member as soon as possible when they come in. That starts at the recruiting centres. At the recruiting centres this is discussed openly with every person who wants to be a member. They're expected to sign a form that says they agree that this behaviour shouldn't be taken.

Sexualized culture exists and our job, in my humble opinion, is to ensure that Canadian Armed Forces members realize that they need to be held to a higher standard. This is a firm belief of military ethos, as you're aware, and we need to ensure that it's at the forefront. I'll go your third question, which has to do with discipline and such.

I believe there are a number of chains of command out there that are wanting to do the right thing, and we see it today. We see it more today than we have in the past because there is a big spotlight on people who are doing these types of behaviour. I must admit that in my town halls, as I went across the country, that wasn't always the case. It hasn't been the case in some areas, not everywhere...but the reality is that some people have turned a blind eye, and we need to address that as a matter of course. With the change of culture in the Canadian Armed Forces, we've been talking about it for a long period of time. We say it's going to take a long time. It is one of the largest challenges we have in getting rid of this insidious behaviour. It's fundamentally changing people's ideals of what appropriate behaviour is.

We don't have stats that go back years and years, unfortunately. Information comes to us from a great many sources. It comes from the SMRC, the sexual misconduct response centre, and comes to us from the MP and from the health services group. We get some anecdotal stuff from our padres. We also get it from the ombudsman. We get it from a change of command, so there is a plethora of avenues. Today we're trying to amalgamate all of that information so that we have a clearer picture.

The Stats Canada survey that we had contracted for earlier this year will give us a baseline indication of where we are today and where we have been in the last number of months, but it will not give us a strong indication of where we were five, 10, 15, or 20 years ago.

We're working very much today, because to identify how we're getting better, we need to be able to show that tangibly.

Jennifer, do you have any thoughts on this?

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** Just to add to that, our approach has changed considerably from the 1980s. Both General Whitecross and I were members of the Canadian Forces then.

Our approach to addressing the concern at that time was sort of one prong: training. We felt that if we trained people about what was right and what was wrong, it would fix the problem. We have a more comprehensive approach to this now, and that includes the use of both disciplinary measures and administrative measures and holding leaders to account. Because General Vance made this endeavour an operation, he has given orders to the Canadian Armed Forces, and he has made those orders and expectations very clear at all levels.

Now, leaders are held to account for lack of action in their units or at their level. We are tracking this and we are reporting. People have been removed from positions of command and supervisory positions. Charges have been laid. We've had eight convictions in the period from January to June for sexual-related offences. We've taken administrative measures as well, which include not just the corrective and remedial measures, but release from the Canadian Armed Forces and career action. It's a much more comprehensive and serious approach at all levels. It is also holding leaders to account.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Mr. Chair, may I add one more more small point?

**The Chair:** Yes. Please go ahead.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** When we're talking about sexual misconduct to the extreme, which is sexual assault, it is very intimate violence, in most cases between two people—men, women, it matters not. The issue at place there is having trust that the system will take care of you when it's your word against someone else's, so encouraging people to report... You talk about the disciplinary system. Encouraging people to report and giving them the confidence that the chain of command is going to do the right thing is another challenge that we have. We encourage people to report as much as possible.

• (1125)

**The Chair:** Mr. Garrison, you have the floor.

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP):** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to extend a warm welcome, of course, to both Rear-Admiral Bennett and Lieutenant-General Whitecross.

Also, congratulations on your appointment, Lieutenant-General Whitecross. I'll try not to view it as a loss for us but as a gain for Canada on the world stage.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Thank you.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** To begin, I want to make a remark about the seriousness of this problem. I was at a NATO Parliamentary Association reception just this week, where one of the participants, one of our allies, opened his remarks with a “rape joke”. I think it indicates the severity of the sexualized culture and the mountains that you have to climb here.

I am going to ask some fairly serious questions, but I do think it's important to say that I think many things are going very well and are quite worthy of praise. I appreciate the seriousness with which the leadership is taking this question. We've moved a long way from when people said that the policy was zero tolerance, because zero tolerance is always an aspiration and never a policy. Certainly, as Rear-Admiral Bennett just mentioned, there's the shift in emphasis to include more extensive measures. What you didn't mention is the emphasis on support to victims, which I think was lacking in the past. I really welcome that.

Changing culture is not an easy task. I do recognize why your emphasis is right now focused very much on serving members, but I want to ask about some other related areas of concern. I want to ask about cadets, families living on base, civilian employees, and, if there's time, reserves.

Let me start with cadets. We have more than 50,000 cadets in programs across the country. That's a very positive thing and is something that I hope we can expand, but we have some concerns. Because of some high-profile incidents, I have had concerns from parents about placing their kids in cadets.

Have questions of harassment and sexual assault been integrated into the orientation and training for cadets themselves? Are there special outreach provisions for cadets who may be the target of harassment and assault? We know this goes on everywhere in society. There's nothing special about cadets that would mean it wouldn't go on there.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're very honoured to have Admiral Bennett as part of our group, because, as you're aware, she actually helped run the reserve and cadet program. I'll ask her to speak on the specifics.

I want to add that the cadet program, which is overseen by the Canadian Armed Forces, is still bound by duty and respect for all. Our premise is that, whether it's the cadet leaders or the volunteers, people will follow suit on the objectives of Operation Honour, in addition to the men and women who work on bases and wings across the country and our reserve colleagues.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** While I'm not currently in charge of the portfolio, I am very well aware of the programs for the two youth programs, the junior Canadian rangers in addition to the cadets. The programs are somewhat unique because of the environment and the communities from which those participants are drawn. In the cadet program, for both cadets and junior Canadian rangers, while they are not members of the Canadian Armed Forces, we are entrusted with their care, and that is a responsibility that we hold most dear and we take very seriously. We realize families put their trust in us to lead them.

From the outset, there's extensive screening for all volunteers, adults, who work with the program, whether they're members of the Canadian Armed Forces or civilian volunteers. There's also specialized training that has been created. A new program created in the last two years called social relations training is now mandatory for all cadets and adult leaders. That training was designed to enhance awareness and understanding, to encourage action and reporting, and to facilitate some of the existing harassment training in both programs.

The junior Canadian ranger program has a different network of support options based at the community level because of the differences there with police and community health services. There are special outreach programs provided at the community level before incidents occur and awareness training for both cadets and junior Canadian rangers, but also before summer camp and at the camps.

Because the majority of cadets are youth and therefore underage, our programs and the information is protected. The cadets are protected, and extra care is given to ensure that the care is appropriate, not only for that cadet, but for other members of the corps and squadrons and their families. There's quite a variety of extensive programs from the training, the awareness, and the support programs.

● (1130)

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Thanks very much.

I also want to acknowledge that there's been some very creative work done in cadets on accommodating transgender cadets, and it's world-leading.

My second question is about families on base, especially children on base. There's been some confusion over the years about who has jurisdiction in cases of harassment or assault of non-serving family members on the base and, in particular, minors on the base. Is this the responsibility of the civilian police or the military police?

The military's had a spotty record in the past in terms of its handling of domestic violence and sexual assault against children because of this jurisdictional problem, I think, largely. Whose responsibility is it to protect kids living on base? Are the services of the sexual misconduct response centre available to families?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** The sexual misconduct response centre takes calls from all of the people, as you saw from their progress report. They take calls from military, civilian members, public servants, family members, and cadets. Though our priority right now in Operation Honour is to deal with military members, they take calls from these people and they help facilitate the support that they need. They would never just let them take their numbers; they actually try to facilitate assistance as much as possible.

In terms of jurisdiction, our military police on bases and wings across the country have relationships with all of the civilian police departments or the federal police department, depending on where they are. In the cases where there are only military because they're out by themselves, say they're on deployment or whatever, then obviously it resides within the military police purview. However, if it has to do with non-military members, they actually try, as long as there are civilian police in the local area, to give the file over to the civilian police, and then they work in consultation in order to be able to effect whatever needs to be done for that situation. In the grand majority of cases across the country, those jurisdictions will go to the civilian police.

**The Chair:** And that's time.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** I hope I'll get another round. I have many other questions I'd like to ask. Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Gerretsen, you have the floor.

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

To the general and admiral, thank you very much for your work on this. It is obviously not an easy subject to tackle, but I admire your willingness and passion to do it.

I represent a riding, Kingston and the Islands, which has CFB Kingston in it. I was born and raised in Kingston. I've had many friends whose parents have been in the military, and I have been quite exposed to the culture that exists within the military.

I know of the subordinate nature of that culture, and the ranking in that culture. Quite often, I have heard—aneccdotally at least, from what I would see within the community—of instances where, even when there were matters that took place off the base, proper repercussions were handled within the military structure, even though those individuals were in the broader community at the time. I understand and appreciate the rich sense of discipline that is ingrained within the culture of the military.

I recognize the fact that, as you say, the culture will take a long time to change—generations. How do you crack that nut of encouraging people to come forward, to voice their concerns, and to file their complaints but still appreciate the discipline that exists between the different levels of command?

How do you ensure that the culture can be adapted appropriately to respect that discipline but still ensure that individuals will be treated with the respect and the seriousness of their matters as they are concerned, especially when that culture has so ingrained in it a sense of “we will handle this” or “the next rank up will handle this”?

I have been dealing, in my riding, with the issue of the Phoenix pay system. I have a lot of military personnel, and I have a lot of personnel from Corrections Canada. The ones who come banging on the door at my office are the ones from Corrections, because they know that, when they need to, they will make noise. The military respect the discipline of reporting to your superior. I am curious whether you can expand on that.

•(1135)

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** I would submit that there is more than one culture in the Canadian Armed Forces. There are cultures

depending on your occupation; on whether you are in the air force, the navy, or the army; and on whether you are SOF, special operations forces. There are cultures depending on whether you are an officer or an NCM.

Of the two specifics you are addressing, one has to do with our culture of a hierarchical system, which is very much who we are. You know where you are in that proverbial totem pole, and you know your roles and responsibilities based on your position and your rank.

Your responsibilities as a supervisor are at the heart of what Madame Deschamps has said in her report—and I'll go to the sexualized culture in just a moment. The heart of her report is that the people in the chain of command—not in every case but in the cases she is aware of—did not do the right thing.

That hierarchical culture, which is the backbone of military cultures around the world, in this respect is broken, in that people are not taking account of what their people are doing or, when someone has come forward, have not done the right thing. Again, it's not in all cases. I certainly don't want to broad-brush those who are doing the right thing.

When General Vance determined that he needed to give orders to the Canadian Armed Forces, Operation Honour, he did it on that premise, that as military members—which I understand a number of you have been—we understand what orders are, and the orders are that the chain of command will take care of their people.

Now, one could argue that it should never have to be an order, because it is implicit, but in this particular case, as it goes to that sexualized culture, the requirement for an order is there, to be sure that people are aware of what is and what is not going to be appropriate or put up with by the chain of command.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Thank you for that. I appreciate it.

There is one other part I want to touch on before I run out of time.

In the scope of Operation Honour, and sexual misconduct in particular, a lot of the discussion focuses on women and the way they are treated, at times inappropriately. I think that's justified.

I also represent RMC, and I had the great pleasure of serving on a city council in Kingston with one of the first female cadets in the first year. I have heard about some of the horror stories that can exist in that male-versus-female relationship.

I think the reality of the matter is that there is also sexual misconduct between males at times. Can you expand on how Operation Honour will protect those individuals as well?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** I think we've made it clear, not just in the town halls but in the Operation Honour nexus, that every member of the Canadian Armed Forces, man or woman, regardless of their sexual orientation, will be treated with due dignity and respect. In Madam Deschamps' report, she did speak predominantly of women, but she also spoke about male-on-male rape, and a couple of other things specifically to do with male, or the LGBTQ, community.



Our premise is that every single person, as a standard, must be treated the same. So we go back to the gender-based analysis, the unbiased assumptions that people make based on what people look like and the like, and then ensure that our policies, our training, and everything else actually does that.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** That's where I was going with it. Will the training—not necessarily the policies, because those are overarching—be to the benefit of also the, perhaps, male on male?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1140)

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** Could I add, just to reassure you, we are consulting with peer support groups and advocates, male support groups, male survivors, and we have been working quite extensively to gather training resources as well, to ensure that we are covering the diverse range, and that is included in our victim testimonials and our training scenarios. Yes, this is not a gender-based specific-to-women challenge that we have.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

We're moving to five-minute questions now. Ms. Alleslev, you have the floor.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Thank you very much, and thank you for coming today. It's an honour to have you here.

I can't help but notice, though, that the leadership roles in this particular initiative, including the gender-based analysis that you made mention of earlier, are all women. Is it possible that that could be interpreted as being a women's issue that can be solved by women, and not something that, perhaps, male officers, of which there is a significantly higher percentage in the Canadian Forces, should concern themselves with?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** That's a very good point, and I would add that when I was first named to lead the effort, it was something I had to deal with myself. In the eyes and ears of the Canadian public, perhaps, I was a spokesperson on this, what I would term, insidious behaviour.

When I took a step back and realized that I personally—I'm just going to speak about me and then I want to speak about my colleagues—am so passionate and dedicated to effecting change on this, I stand here in the belief that I'm the right person, and Jennifer is the right person, to take it in the initial stages.

I have two additional points. General Vance has made it very clear it is his priority. He is the spokesman. This is his issue, and he leads it for the Canadian Armed Forces. He has ensured that every one of his direct reports...so my colleagues at the lieutenant general rank also have to own this and they need to own it throughout their ranks. Institutionally, Admiral Bennett and I are taking care of the institution, training, education, and policies. But when it comes down to leadership and the command and control issues, that is done by every single one of my colleagues and my peers, right down to the lowest level, men and women, in command.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Thank you, and please don't misunderstand me. It was in no way a question—

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** No, I understand.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** —of your capability or the job that you have been doing, which is outstanding. However, it can be misinterpreted, perhaps, that while General Vance is taking it seriously, he also is the chief of the defence staff and has other things on his plate as well as this.

I know that you have focused on understanding the problem and then responding to the incidents and then, of course, supporting victims, and then prevention. You've stated that you are making significant progress, but I would like to understand what the key metrics are in each of those categories that you're using to define the progress that you're making.

I was an officer in the Canadian Forces. I was at Royal Military College in Kingston, and back in 1998 I was able to be trained under SHARP, which was then a significant program around harassment and racism, which included gender equity. I was recently at my 25th reunion and was speaking with some of the cadets there, and it's difficult to know what progress has been made. I think I'd like to understand from you what significant metrics, measurable outcomes, you're using to be able to define progress.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Thank you.

Mr. Chair, if I could, I'd like to defer to Admiral Bennett. She's working on the actual metrics issue, and she'll be able to provide you more detail.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** That is one of our greatest challenges. We realize that it's easy to demonstrate intent and action, but it's a matter of outcomes. It's the "so what?" We're only at the beginning of that stage, and so a great deal of our measurement at this point is anecdotal as we look at what impact we are having.

The first line, understanding, which you spoke about, is ongoing. That's engaging our institution for a better understanding of the scope and the nature of the problem, but we're finding that the conversations are changing at the base and wing levels. This topic is being more openly discussed. We're getting more questions and inquiries through my team, through the sexual misconduct response centre. People are asking questions, asking for resources to better understand.

• (1145)

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** So that's something we would probably see the actual metrics and outcomes on as you develop them later.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** The Statistics Canada survey will give us a baseline about prevalence, and about awareness and understanding. We've also changed and developed specific metrics for recruits, for cadets in both of the military colleges. We're doing our unit climate surveys. We're enhancing a number of our current measurement strategies, but we're also having that discussion. We will then look at retention, recruiting, and a number of other factors, but we're only beginning.

**The Chair:** Your time's up, Leona.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'd like to give the floor over to Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** It's great seeing you again, General Whitecross and Admiral Bennett. Thank you for your service, and for the service you're providing right now to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces. This is an important role you're playing. Although Operation Honour is the operation of the CDS and the leadership, you're the ones implementing it and making sure the rules are being followed.

I want to touch on one comment that was already made about the disciplinary actions that have been taken. I think some of us would be interested in knowing what types of disciplinary actions have been taken against those who have perpetrated sexual misconduct and sexual assaults. Perhaps you could give us some examples. Also, what actions have been taken against those who were in the chain of command, who really failed the victim or turned a blind eye, as you put it, to this insidious behaviour?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Mr. Chair, again, I'm going to ask Jennifer to speak on that. We actually have some information we can provide to you, and perhaps afterwards we'll be able to provide you a paper copy of some updates.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** As I mentioned earlier, there have been a series of summary trials and courts martial as well. The courts martial results are publicly available. The provost marshal and the JAG both have annual reports in which they report on investigations and the findings regarding charges and our judicial system. One commanding officer has been relieved of command. One RSM has been relieved, and 15 members were relieved from supervisory or instructional positions in the period between April and September. In addition to the charges and the convictions we've had through the summary trial and courts martial, there are a number of courts martial pending for sex-related offences.

In terms of the fines and the punishments for those, they have ranged all the way from imprisonment and release from the Canadian Armed Forces to fines, in accordance with the scale of punishment. Not all of those charges were necessarily for sexual assault; some were for conduct related to sexually related behaviour and inappropriate behaviour.

In terms of administrative actions, those range from recorded warnings and actions on file to career actions. There is a progressive process, and in those cases we have taken action to relieve people from supervisory roles, as I said, to lay charges when there has been an offence, or to make records on people's files that will impact their career progression or potential succession planning, and in some cases a member has been released from the Canadian Armed Forces.

**Mr. James Bezan:** When we started down this path, with Operation Honour in particular, I was concerned about upper management being able to understand what they needed to do and trying to implement it, especially with the strong directive that came from the CDS. My concern was with what was going to happen to middle management. What about the petty officers, warrant officers, sergeant majors, and master corporals? Were they getting it? Do you think the disciplinary actions that have been taken are sending the message that the sexual culture that did exist within some segments of the Canadian Armed Forces is being quashed?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** I can tell you that the middle managers, certainly the chief warrant officers, are getting the message down to the people, to the other ranks. Chief Warrant

Officer West and a number of the other level one chief warrant officers of mine, and others who come out of the army, speak at the training required by all senior NCOs in order to be able to get promoted, and they speak to them on a monthly basis. They go over to Saint-Jean where the courses are being held, and they speak very openly on this particular subject.

When it started a little over a year ago, when they would go there and speak, there were a lot of comments—incredulous, non-belief kinds of comments. Today, that's completely turned around. People are listening and providing anecdotes of what has happened. They're asking for advice on what they should do if they are put into a particular situation. So the conversation itself has turned around. It's taken a number of months, I'll grant you that, but I think that's actually a good anecdotal measurement of where we are.

● (1150)

**Mr. James Bezan:** General Whitecross, you travelled to a number of allies to look at how they dealt with sexual misconduct before we started up the sexual conduct response centre. Do you feel you have the right mix of tools to provide the support we need to victims as well as the capacity to investigate any allegations that come forward?

Admiral Bennett, do you feel you have what you need to do the job that's been tasked to your office?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Our visits to a couple of our allied nations made it clear that our first priority must be the victims, which is what we brought back with us. They also said that we should take our time to do it right. I would venture to say, as a member mentioned a little while ago about the SHARP program, that perhaps it was the right thing at the time, but it didn't have other things around it. It wasn't bred into a sustainable, enduring, focus on this inappropriate behaviour. Their comment was to make sure that what we do today will be there tomorrow and will exist for years to come. We're taking that very much in hand.

As for the comment about helping the victims, that is our number one priority, and the importance of creating a centre where they can go was made clear to us. Now the centre itself, the sexual misconduct response centre, is not at its final operating capability. Based on the calls it's getting, it still needs to do a lot of analysis and research. Should it increase its hours? Should it increase the number of counsellors? Should it actually be satellite units, maybe in other regions across the country? We're still doing that type of work. In the past, the service they're providing now was never available within the Government of Canada, certainly not in the Armed Forces. It has actually been very helpful. We now have people who, besides getting served, are also benefiting from investigations that I would humbly submit would not have happened had we not had the centre. We still have a lot of work to do, but I think it was a good start.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** In response to your question to me, I have tremendous support from within the Armed Forces, but at the same time, one of the things that we've been praised for is that we've asked for help and gone to external subject matter experts. We've gone to other militaries and other institutions, because we are not the only ones dealing with the issue. We are drawing upon resources and considering the use of expertise, whether it's commercial training programs or proven resources. We're also establishing an external advisory council to be able to bring that knowledge to us, and we are constantly looking for people who have the knowledge that we lack.

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

I'm going to give the floor to Mr. Rioux.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ladies, I commend your work, because you have a difficult mission, as you must change the culture. I'm happy to hear that the Saint-Jean riding is part of the solution.

I would like to talk about the report published on February 1, 2016, following the recommendations of former Justice Deschamps. The report states that “The Canadian armed forces is making good progress in executing the Operation HONOUR mission, notwithstanding the daunting nature of institutional culture change [...]”.

Could you give me some examples of this “daunting nature”, and tell me why that is so?

[English]

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Negative aspects that would result in cultural change? Sir, I can only submit that changing the culture of this behaviour can only breed positive aspects and positive results.

If people—men or women—can't abide by what we determine to be honesty, respect, and dignity for all persons, then I would submit that they probably don't belong in uniform representing our country. I offer that as a comment.

There are a number of challenges that we have discussed with Justice Deschamps. Culture change is just one of them. Because that's such a large challenge, getting people to report is a very closely aligned second issue to the challenge that we're bringing. We're trying to create the environment where people trust, which is a very large word right now, so that all of the people who surround them, military, civilian—predominantly military men and women in their chain of command—are going to do the right thing should they decide to come forward.

Our other challenge is momentum. We have momentum now. We need to maintain that momentum as we go forth, in the years to come.

• (1155)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** When we hear that the change is daunting, could it be because people have trouble defining what constitutes sexual misconduct?

[English]

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** I'm sorry, sir. I didn't catch the first part of that question.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean Rioux:** We spoke about the daunting nature of the change. We said that people have difficulty understanding the nature of sexual misconduct. Is the problem that the definition is not clear to them?

[English]

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** That's a good question, sir. In fact, one of the recommendations from Justice Deschamps was to clean up our definitions, make them easier to understand, and give them all residence in one policy, or at least unify them so that people aren't searching all over the place for different policies and different definitions.

As a military member, my definition of sexual harassment, for example, is different than that of my public service colleagues. My definition of sexual harassment is harassment that occurs regardless of where I am, on the sports field, in the grocery store, at work, or on deployment, whereas sexual harassment at the workplace for my public service colleagues will be something that happened in the workplace. We need to ensure that the nuance we create for our own military members is resonant, and well-understood by every single man and woman in uniform.

The fact that we said understanding is an important part of our action plan... People understand what sexual misconduct means. They understand the difference between right and wrong, but what can we do about it? What are the best practices around the country and externally? What facilities, or as Jen Bennett mentioned, what other organizations or rape crisis centres, for example, can help us determine the best way forward in order to meet this insidious need? We need to take all of the good things and put them within our action plan so we're not starting from time zero. We need to acquire a huge understanding about how to eradicate this behaviour, not just eradicate the behaviour itself.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** Could I add something? It wasn't just a matter of defining the types of behaviour, but the scope and the range. This was to ensure that people understood that this spans not just offences in the Criminal Code but also comments in the workplace, or as one of the members mentioned, inappropriate jokes and off-handed comments. One of our challenges from the outset has been to describe the scope and the range of the behaviours and actions we were describing.

There's also a change in the vocabulary of Canadian society, so we are running into challenges with words like “bystander”. While we do bystander intervention training, the word “bystander” implies standing by, so an interesting conversation is happening in larger society about how we empower people to take action.

The Government of Canada is now moving to a strategy for violence in the workplace that will include the span of activities we're addressing under Operation Honour. The language that we're using is evolving as well in society, and we're following that very closely.

**The Chair:** Thank you for the response.

Mr. Miller, you have the floor.

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Admiral Bennett and General Whitecross, thank you very much for being here, and thank you for your service to Canada.

Congratulations on your new appointment, General. I think that's fantastic.

In reading your report, it seems that the number of reported incidents is rising, but I believe that probably a fair percentage of that is due to people finally realizing that the military is serious about cleaning this up, and they're reporting more. Is there any kind of a breakdown that you can give on that? Are there actually more incidents, or is it more of the older stuff?

• (1200)

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** The reality is we don't have previous stats from years ago. The Statistics Canada survey will give us a baseline from here on in and that will be available in November.

Intuitively, we knew that as we created the environment for people to come forward, we would have an increase in reporting, and our allies mentioned that as well. Be prepared, they said, to get more reports in the first number of years as you are going down this road, because people will test the system. They will want to make sure that what you're saying you're actually going to do.

We're in that phase right now of people coming forward, and I would venture to say not everyone has come forward. There are still a lot of challenges in encouraging people to report. One of the benefits of having the centre is they don't have to start a report. They don't have to have an investigation. They can just seek any of the help that they need in order to get over what had happened, or at least in order to face what has happened to them.

In some cases, thank goodness, they get that confidence level and that trust and they actually start a report and they actually start the investigation, and we can address the issue of the perpetrators or the alleged offenders, which I think is really good. But the reality is we don't have the stats for the past.

A number of people who have come forward are also coming forward on historical issues, things that have happened in the past. We've gotten this right from the beginning when we went out on our town halls; people wanting to tell us what happened to them five, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 years ago, because they haven't gotten over it. We're also trying to facilitate the help that they need.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** The fact that they haven't gotten over it shows that obviously people are scarred for life on that. But the fact that they feel confident coming forth I think reinforces my own thoughts that no doubt the military is trying to clean this up and I do give you credit for that.

I noticed in your report here that there seems to be a higher number of cases, I believe it was 27% or 28%, of cadets or new recruits. If the culture is changing, or we hope it's changing, are you concerned about that number or is there a specific reason why, in the new recruits, that number seems to be so high? Could you comment on that?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** I would also go back to the fact that we didn't have stats before, but there is an increase. I have a couple of comments there.

Cadets and officer cadets are two completely different things. I just want to make sure that we're aligned here. The cadet program is youth programs, 18 and under, and officer cadets are new officers coming into the military college system. And we are creating the environment, I believe, that.... We start right at the recruiting centres now. We talk about it and we say that this behaviour won't be put up with.

At the CFLRS, the Canadian Forces leadership and recruit school in Saint-Jean, the instructors have brand new training that they've gone through, including the instructors at the Canadian military colleges and the leadership folks there. We talk about it and we ensure that for all of the new recruits they know that this is behaviour they don't have to put up with. I believe that has a lot to do with the fact that people are coming forward.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** We like to think, and I hope we can trust, that the mood or the thought has changed in society about misconduct, about sexual harassment. Do you feel that you're seeing that in your new cadets, new recruits, in general?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** I would say yes, sir. At the recruit school just in the last month, a report came up of a recruit who felt uncomfortable about behaviour by one of the staff. It was dealt with immediately and that recruit is still with us. I am sure, anecdotally, though we don't have the stats, that some recruits would have left because of that kind of behaviour, but because they are seeing that the leadership at the leadership school in Saint-Jean are doing things about it at the moment, immediately, they're remaining and they're getting the support that they need. I believe that has a lot to do with the education.

I would just preface that to say we're not where we need to be. We still have a lot of work to do, but I am comforted that we're making gains.

• (1205)

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Keep up the good work on it and I trust that you're headed in the right direction.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Thank you, sir.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** Could I just add to your first question, sir? Over the year that the SMRC has been open, we've had 29 investigations opened as a result of people calling the centre and being transferred that we wouldn't have had before. I think we're having those indications as well about confidence in somebody reaching out first to a counsellor and then going to military police.

I would add to the discussion in your later questions that, like society, we still struggle. One of the members mentioned earlier people coming in with a different set of values and norms, but it's important that we establish right from the beginning what is acceptable and what isn't. We are dealing with young people who are finding their way and coming in with different values.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Thanks, Admiral.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fisher, the floor is yours.

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

As other members have said, it's an honour to have you here today, so thank you very much for coming.

I'd like to talk about post-complaint reintegration of victims. Can you outline some of the success of reintegration? Is there ostracization? Is there a feeling of inclusion still there, or would you suggest that there are some problems reintegrating?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Sorry, sir, are you speaking of the alleged offender or the victim?

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** The victim's reintegration post-complaint.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** The reality is—and Madame Deschamps characterized it—when men and women who have been victimized, they are ostracized when they go forward, for a whole bunch of the wrong reasons in my humble opinion. We're trying to turn that around. It is not that we're stating that we need to ostracize the alleged offender, but we need to rally around the victim.

General Vance made that very clear. I know my colleagues—the commanders of the army, air force, and navy—are also fundamentally online with that need to ensure that we give support emotionally, intellectually, and mentally, that the chain of command trusts everything, and that we rally around the victim as a priority. That's what we're trying to do, but it's difficult for them to feel like they can go back into their work environment. It all depends on how we've treated the alleged offender, knowing that due diligence is required as well for them. We need to ensure that we turn that around, which has not necessarily been the case in the past, so we are working on that.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Do you have any examples of success, or do you have any feeling that it's working?

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** We are integrating our victim support, not just to encourage the reporting but through the process. One example of that is that we do have a single point of contact for the military police assigned to the SMRC so that victims don't have to repeat their story to numerous people, depending on when they call. That is being extended through the military justice system as well so that the director of military prosecutions is now giving priority to sexual-related offences so that they are tried much more quickly. The same prosecutor is assigned, again helping that victim to understand the process and have consistency of the treatment there.

Our support services were increasing the awareness and the education of our support workers so that they understand the impact of trauma. We'll extend that back into the unit level in the communities, much as we've done with mental health initiatives so that we better understand what that person is going through and how we can support them.

Our greatest challenge still, though, is in very small units, or on board a ship, or on an operation where it is a very small and close community. We are looking in our judicial system about community impact statements beyond victim impact statements, about sharing with the community the impact of that. We are borrowing from some of our other initiatives—from mental health in particular—looking at how we reintegrate and assist members who've been affected by trauma of this nature.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I certainly appreciate the effort. Perhaps in the future we'll be able to see whether there's a success or a win in this.

General, you spoke about the sexual offence response teams launched on Tuesday. Then you stated that every report of a sexual offence, new or historical, will be investigated independent of Operation Honour, and then you mentioned the military judicial processes.

Is there a separation between the military and judicial processes and Operation Honour? Could you maybe outline what that looks like, that separation? Are they running parallel? Are they running in collaboration? Is there collaboration between those different processes?

• (1210)

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** The judicial system and the military police system are outside the chain of command, and for very good reasons, as you can understand. They have very much taken on the recommendations from Madame Deschamps and the Operation Honour requirements and objectives. They're looking within their organizations to see how they can support and ensure that they're working in concert with us. SORT, the sexual offence response team, is one of the results of that collaboration. Here the military police, part of the national investigative service, have additional training on sexual offences. They are far better trained in investigations and in the treatment of victims and the like, so they're the only ones who will be dealing with this. They are highly trained, whereas a national investigative service investigator may be doing a number of other things.

This will give us timely investigations, which is one of the issues Madame Deschamps talked about. It will also give us the ability to create almost subject matter experts in this area. That's required in order to help out the victims.

It's the same with the director of military prosecutions through the military justice system. As Admiral Bennett said, they're looking at ways to help victims through the process: only having to speak to one person, only having to tell the story once. In fact the director of military prosecutions must agree with the investigator that charges can or cannot be laid. In the past, they both had an ability to yea or nay the military police, the investigator, or the director of military prosecutions. Now there has to be one point.

These are the sorts of things we've brought on. A number of other initiatives are just being started. There's the court martial review, and a number of other ones are happening. We're very much working in collaboration.

**The Chair:** You're out of time. I think we'll have time at the end, so we can circle back.

Mr. Garrison, you have three minutes.

**Mr. Randall Garrison:** Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

I left off talking about families on base. I was very glad to hear of the greater co-operation between the military police and civilian authorities. I saw how, in one particularly egregious historical case, that co-operation did not take place, which has to this day left the victim without the justice they're seeking. I think that's another very positive thing that you're working on. The extra training for military police in sexual assaults is very important. Congratulations on that. I'm not sure what we do about some of those historic injustices. They have to be dealt with in another forum.

As I said, I understand your emphasis on serving members. To that end, I have three quick questions.

The first question is about civilian employees. In my riding I have just as many civilian employees of DND as I do serving members. They're often in mixed workplaces. How have you been dealing with the question of those mixed workplaces?

Second, with regard to reservists—I have just as many reservists as I have the other categories—the Auditor General has expressed some concerns about training for reservists. I wonder if that also applies to the training in sexual misconduct.

My third and last question has to do with peacekeeping deployment. There has certainly been a reduction in peacekeeping training within the Canadian military. I wonder whether you're confident that those about to be deployed on new missions are getting the training they need in terms of sexual misconduct with civilians populations abroad.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Sir, if I may, I'll take the last one first, because it's actually a fairly easy question. Sorry: I don't mean to call it easy. It's a very difficult question.

Anyone who goes off on deployments, peacekeeping or NATO or the like, gets additional training in culture, depending on where they're going. They also get the women, peace, and security UNSCR 1325 training on gender issues going into the theatre of operation. So yes, absolutely there is training, and it will get better as we progress.

In terms of civilians and reservists, we are working hand in hand with Mr. Kin Choi, the ADM for HR for civilians, in ensuring that our policies are aligned. I know that Admiral Bennett, on our behalf, and a member of his staff are working very much not just on harassment issues but also on the whole well-being of members in the department—military and civilian, reservists, contractors, all peoples. We're dealing with not just what I would say are the harder social issues, as we're discussing today, but right through to pressure in the workplace, stress relief, resilience training, and all that kind of stuff so that we can have a more comprehensive approach to all members of the defence team. I know that Admiral Bennett is very much seized with the work we're doing there.

For reservists it's very much along the same lines. We don't characterize reservists as anybody different from a military member. Whether you are on reserve duty, on full call-out duty, or a regular force member, the expectations, as a member of the military, are the same.

● (1215)

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** I can add some specifics on training. With the pre-deployment training, there is a greater effort now on the women, peace, and security gender considerations on operations. We have assigned gender advisers to all of the operational commanders, and they will deploy when we go on operations. We're not alone in that. It is both a NATO and a UN initiative, and at the forefront of nations in those two alliances.

With reserve training, and with the engagement in Operation Honour, it is for all Canadian Armed Forces members. While there may be differences in the delivery to Canadian rangers, those in the cadet organization and administration training service, or the primary reserve, basically, all Canadian Armed Forces members are engaged in this training. It is being developed for particular use at the local level and at the unit level, so that resources are readily available. It's not just for full-time members; it's also for part-time members.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We're done for our scheduled questioning. I know there's still other questions out there. I'd like to go around the group again. I'm going to try to limit these to five minutes, so we can make sure everyone gets an equitable amount of time. I'm going to start off with Ms. Alleslev. You have the floor for five minutes.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Thank you very much.

I'm wondering if you could shed some light on how this program is being incorporated for the women in the military program, in particular with officers.

Sometimes culture change also comes through leadership and the ability to attract and retain, and have women in leadership positions. What kind of progress are we making with the percentage of women officers in senior leadership positions, particularly in operational roles as MOCs?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** General Vance has made it clear that we're to grow by 1% per year for the next 10 years to make the 25% quota given to us by the Canadian Human Rights Commission. That, quite honestly, is where we need to be. We're at 15% right now, and it's about the same for officers as it is for NCMs.

Some occupations have a far higher percentages than others, as you can appreciate. The more non-traditional occupations have smaller numbers versus the traditional occupations. We need to get rid of that lexicon “non-traditional versus traditional”, and we need to start speaking about military occupations as they're meant to be, which is gender neutral or parity, whichever words you choose.

There is a lot of work happening on that. We have our first Canadian Armed Forces diversity strategy. It's just been developed this year to help take us out to more of an enduring process. We're working hard with the recruiting centres to ensure that we're getting more women in, for all the good reasons. We're encouraging men and women of visible minorities, and aboriginals to self-identify so that we can ensure we have the right numbers of people within the Canadian Armed Forces that meet our diversity numbers.

There's a lot of comprehensive work being done on training, education, and recruiting, but more so on retention. Women tend to get out at particular moments of their lives, for very good reasons, whether it has to do with family or geographical stability and the like.

We need to create the environment where they feel as though they can remain in the Canadian Armed Forces and we will meet their personal needs.

Admiral Bennett and I are examples of this. Public opinion research shows that women in Canadian society don't understand what it means to be in the military. A small number of them seem to resonate with military life. The reasons for that are they don't believe you can have a family, they don't believe you can have success, and they don't believe you can go into any occupation. We need to get the word out.

We're working on a far more comprehensive marketing strategy that didn't exist in the past.

• (1220)

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Specifically, with women in leadership and senior officer positions, are you also measuring that?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Absolutely. This is the first time in the history of the Canadian Armed Forces that we have seven female generals and flag officers.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** That's out of how many?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** About 100. Note taken. I get it. She gets it.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** In addition to my roles with the strategic response team, I'm the champion for women in defence. We are working extensively on the premise of "seeing is believing". Having junior officers with operational experience who represent the next generation has been very important and critical for us. The way they speak and the way they represent themselves is quite different than General Whitecross and I, who experienced that transition period.

People do need to see themselves in these careers and they need to understand, especially for that operation. We have some wonderful examples that we're utilizing as our spokespeople to get out visibly and show that it can be done.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Thank you very much for the privilege of being able to ask you these questions.

That's all I have.

**The Chair:** Mr. Paul-Hus, you have the floor.

[Translation]

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

I'd like to go back to the main causes of the increase in the number of cases of harassment or assault.

The results of the investigation of the Canadian Forces will be published in November. We will then have a better idea of who has the most problems, whether the army, the navy or the air force.

Ms. Whitecross, were changes in the conditions of service already planned? We know that during deployments in Afghanistan at the time, or in the context of future deployments with the UN, there are certain obligations insofar as sexual relations are concerned. For instance, two military members who are a couple do not have the right to have sexual relations on these missions; that is forbidden.

There are missions which require observation posts with an infantry section, for instance. There may be eight men and one woman who are together 24 hours a day in remote posts. We want everyone to be equal, but nature being what it is, it can become difficult.

Do you think that the army, the navy and the air force, in fact, the forces in general, will rethink how they conduct operations, and the royal orders governing relations between men and women?

[English]

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** First, in terms of the survey, it will be out at the end of November. It will give us two things. It will give us a baseline, an idea of what the general knowledge is and what has happened, both prior to Operation Honour and since.

In terms of the deployment policies when it comes to personal relationships, we will look at all of our military HR policies for everything in the months and years to come to put a gender-based analysis on them, and to ensure they meet the requirements of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.

I do not espouse that by human nature, men and women will get together. As military members, the expectation is that they will follow orders. If it means there will be no relationship while on deployment, then that's exactly what they will do. We need to ensure that is maintained, because that's the policy and that's the expectation.

Speaking about married couples, I happen to know of married couples who have been deployed at the same time. There is always a risk in deploying married couples, as you're probably aware, one of them being that if they have children, you should make sure one of them is in Canada. They do have the allowance to do their travel at the same time if the operational climate can handle it. Again, the rules are clear.

All of the policies will be looked at again in the months and years to come.

Thank you, sir.

• (1225)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus:** You have received a certain number of complaints. Are you able to assess whether these are mostly cases of assault of a subordinate by a superior? Do you have any information or figures on that? Are the people involved in these cases of the same rank? Are there a lot of cases of assault of a subordinate by a superior, for instance a sergeant who assaults a corporal?

[English]

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** I understand the question a bit better now.

There is a policy out there. It's called "adverse personal relationships". We made it very clear in the beginning of our action plan that we need to not just define it, but ensure it is very clear that whoever is the senior in the relationship, whether it's a sergeant and a corporal, or a colonel and a private—it doesn't matter—the senior member of that relationship must identify the relationship to his or her seniors the minute it starts, or before. If they do not, it will be deemed to be an adverse personal relationship, and that senior member will be held to account.

**The Chair:** I'll just remind you that you can split time.

Mr. Spengemann, did you have another question?

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** One of the comments that I think the committee was struck with, and probably Canadians at large, was the conclusion by you that this is going to take a long time. Many people have echoed you on that point, with some people even saying this is a generational problem. I'm just searching my mind for potential accelerators to make this happen faster. In society at large, we have all kinds of things going on. We have the HeForShe campaign, we had Emma Watson up on the Hill just yesterday.

I wanted to circle back to two comments by my colleagues, the first comment by Ms. Alleslev, which was basically that men need to step up and do their part, and the comment by my colleague Mr. Bezan, that middle management in the Armed Forces could play a stronger role.

If I could invite each of you to speculate on one or two force multipliers, or accelerators, that would bring us downside of the horizon of this taking a generation to fix. If you had carte blanche, and you had two issues that you could change tomorrow, within the tool kit that you have, or maybe even outside of it, what would they be?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** The Canadian Armed Forces, or any military, has this thing called the chain of command. It is a very powerful tool in ensuring that not only do we meet mission success, but that orders are followed. I would submit that a fundamental understanding by every member of the chain of command—which is what we are attempting to achieve, and I believe we've made some progress there—of what it means to treat everybody with dignity and respect will go a long way in order to effect change as fast as possible.

I would also submit that the middle managers, the people who are front and centre with the men and women in uniform on a day-in, day-out basis, are the ones who can effect change as fast as possible.

The faster that we can have them acknowledge and push this issue forward, the faster the organization can actually push forward.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** Is there an incentive system, maybe grafted onto Operation Honour or in parallel with it, that would reinforce men who step up and defend women who are being subject to harassment and abuse?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** We are just starting that, and I'll just give you a quick anecdote. Three junior officers are standing around. A woman comes by and one of the officers is about to make an off-colour joke, so another of the officers says that's intolerable behaviour and leaves with the woman. I find out about it, acknowledge to the person's chain of command, thank him for doing the right thing, and send him a personal note.

I know Admiral Bennett is working on—

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** Operation Honour honourable mentions.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** —Operation Honour honourable mentions. That's difficult for an engineer to say. It's been established to identify those who are doing the right thing, of whom there are many, and to acknowledge the great work they're doing.

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** That's helpful.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** It is helpful. Thank you.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** I would preface my remarks by saying that our challenge remains that we don't have a stagnant population in which to deal with this. We have new recruits continually joining and bringing their sets of values and their experience from society. Therefore, we are really dealing with a huge generational shift and a consistent turnover from people who have lived through transition, to people who are just joining now. That is one of our challenges in not being able to do this quickly, because we need to effect change across so many generations.

One thing that is helpful, and that we could do more of, is promoting a greater general awareness by Canadians about the severity and the impact of this. Sometimes I think we have some challenges in being able to understand the impact, not just on the victim, but on the organization. We're doing that through discussions about the impact on our operational efficiency, our teamwork, and our *raison d'être*.

I think that as society comes to terms with this, and we stop focusing on very high-profile court cases and the results, but instead, we look more holistically at the issues, and what this means to our society; to perpetrators, to victims, to us as institutions and individuals. I think that would be very important and helpful for us because, again, members of the Canadian Armed Forces are Canadian citizens and represent Canadian values, so what we do outside the military has a great impact for us.

Another consideration is that we do need some time. There is a great deal of focus on this, a great deal of pressure because we are held to such a high account. For us, small victories mean a great deal. Sometimes we forget to celebrate and, as General Whitecross mentioned, we spend an awful lot of time looking at correcting the bad behaviour, instead of rewarding the good behaviour, and what right looks like. We need to remind people about that.



● (1230)

**Mr. Sven Spengemann:** Thank you both.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bezan.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Admiral Bennett, in your experience working with the reserves, has there been any analysis done to see whether sexual misconduct is at a different level in the reserve force versus the regular force?

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** The Statistics Canada survey will indicate that, and we've asked for statistics to be broken down. The survey participants were regular force and primary reserve members, so we will have an indication that will help us to understand as well the differences between reserves serving part-time at the unit and the community level versus those on full-time service who are more closely aligned with the regular force. That's our most recent data.

We have done harassment surveys, and we've done some specific work with the reserve to research retention, why people leave the climate within the reserve force. Certainly the Statistics Canada survey will be the first time that we've captured data specific to harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

**Mr. James Bezan:** The only reason I ask is because if you think about our reservists, they have their regular employment outside of the reserves and they could be in career fields where they don't have opportunities to interact with the opposite sex or people of the LGBTQ community. I just wonder if there might be some bias amongst them or inappropriate behaviour because of other experiences they have where they don't have that type of interaction.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** The demographics of the reserve force are generally more diverse, and because of exposure to the civilian community, sometimes they have a very different perspective and a level of tolerance as well.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Well, it works both ways.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** At the same time, we do have a challenge with the reserve force in terms of reporting and jurisdiction, because we do live in both a civilian world and the military world, and of course, offences that would occur in the civilian community versus those that are on DND property. We are looking very closely at that.

Also, in the demographics of the reserve force, there are a lot of younger people, a lot of students, and people who join for a very short time. We're looking at catering our training and our programs of awareness a bit differently for that community.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Just to follow up on what I was speaking about earlier, when you look at the strategic response team that you lead and whether you have the tools it requires, there is an increase in reporting. A lot of it is historical, a lot of people are feeling safer and are coming forward now, and a lot of people are testing the waters. Do you have enough resources? Are there more tools that you need in your tool box to do your job, such as more regulation or legislation, that we as parliamentarians could assist with? Also, if there has been an increase in the number of investigations that the JAG and the military police have to commit to and then also prosecute, do they have the tools?

● (1235)

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** The answer is yes, we have sufficient resources, and when we need resources there hasn't been a question about having access to those because of the high priority of this. We do have, again, the opportunity to call upon civilian expertise. The military police are augmenting their expertise by doing their training with allies, with civilian police forces, with agencies that have that training and the expertise. The addition of the 18 investigators has increased the complement within the Canadian Forces national investigation service, so we are augmenting. The director of military prosecutions is doing a great deal more training than they have traditionally done specific to this, and where they don't have the resources internally they are drawing upon external communities.

In terms of victim advocacy and victims having a voice, I do think there is an opportunity for us, and as well for you as the government, from the perspective of how we assist in that regard.

**Mr. James Bezan:** In the survey that you had Statistics Canada do, 40,000 members were surveyed, both primary reserve and regular force. I'm hoping you had large enough samples from the air force, navy, and army. So that we have an idea of what the survey entailed, what types of questions were asked?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** It was a space and time survey. They wanted to know members' awareness of Operation Honour after August 2015 when General Vance made it an order, their understanding of it, what it meant, and whether they had been exposed to any type of sexual misconduct during that period, as well as anything before that. It was baseline information set from the years prior to August 2015, and then something in order to identify whether there was any other behaviour after August 2015.

It did identify army, air force, navy, different rank levels, and geographic space across the country. Some of the questions were very specific and some were a little bit more vague. With the analysis that is being done between now and the end of November when it's made public, we'll have a better idea of what baseline they've identified.

**RAdm Jennifer Bennett:** In addition, some of the questions were very specific about types of behaviour and then the follow-up on that. Did you report this? Did you feel comfortable reporting? If you didn't, why or why not? Were you satisfied with the results? It was a wide range of questions. We needed that information, first to determine a baseline of prevalence of incidents as well as the types of incidents, and that information will be used to help us to influence training, education, awareness, and our action plan. Are we addressing the right level? Is it reporting that's an issue? Is it retaliation? What are the specific issues?

Since we had such a high response rate and a very representative sample across both the regular force and the primary reserve, we expect those results will be very useful to us.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fisher.

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll try to be quick.

I'm interested in the mandate of Operation Honour. My understanding was it was basically the 10 recommendations of Madame Deschamps. Is it broader than that? In your comments you spoke about it being not limited to these. Could you maybe quickly outline some of the other things in Operation Honour outside of those 10 recommendations?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Mr. Chair, it includes Madam Deschamps' 10 recommendations, but it goes further than that. In fact, as we're developing more of the institutional... Whether it's policies, training, education, surveys, or performance measurements and the like, we are adjusting Operation Honour in new areas. We call them fragos, or fragmentation orders, that add to what we're doing. A lot of that has to do as well with reporting. We're having all of the army, air force, navy, and the special ops and myself as a force

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** What you're hearing.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** —tell people what it is. We need to take that information, in addition to what the response centre finds, and then make the work that we're doing even better, so it really is very much all-encompassing.

• (1240)

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** That's very helpful. Thank you.

One short snapper.

Rear-Admiral, I think it was you who mentioned that the fitness levels now, the standards, are the same between men and women. Are you getting any complaints that this isn't being practised, or are you getting any complaints that it is being practised?

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** It's hard, I'll give you that.

That's my area, one of my responsibilities. The answer is, no. It's being done because that's the decision that we've made as a senior leadership, and I think it speaks in spades about our ability to treat people the same. And it's not only men and women, it's regardless of your age. My birthday was yesterday and I'm now on the other side

of 50 and I'm 5' 2" on a really good day, and it's a tough test. But I agree that this is the way we need to go.

**RAAdm Jennifer Bennett:** When we rolled it out, we did have concerns, so I used that opportunity in my role as the champion for women to introduce women to the test, to let them have a chance to understand it. We are well prepared for the test as well. There are training programs that are designed for people of all shapes and sizes, ages and genders. As we rolled this out, I think fear was the greatest challenge, people thinking, can I do this?

One of the advantages of a common standard is that everyone understands, so that when you are deployed on operations you don't separate people out by thinking you can only lift this amount and you can only do these things. You understand that everyone has met the same standard.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** We'd be happy to give you an opportunity to try the test.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Darren Fisher:** I often use the example—this is a bit of an aside now—I tell young male hockey players to play like female hockey players. It's very difficult to hold yourself up to the standards of, say, the Canadian female Olympic team and the things they've been able to accomplish, or the Canadian soccer team.

It's interesting. I appreciate that comment, thank you.

**LGen Christine Whitecross:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** I think that's pretty much it for the questions.

I want to thank you both for coming. You are charged with a difficult but very necessary task, and it's evident by your testimony here today that the CDS chose the right people for the job. Thank you very much.

I'll suspend for about five or six minutes so we can say our goodbyes.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*







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