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# Standing Committee on the Status of Women

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Chair: Ms. Marilyn Gladu





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• (1100)

[English]

**The Chair (Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 23 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Today's meeting is taking place in the hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021. The webcast will always show the person speaking rather than the entirety of the committee.

As usual, please make sure, when you're not speaking, that your mike is on mute, and when you are speaking, that you speak slowly and clearly and that you address your comments through the chair.

With that, I would like to welcome our guests today. Our witnesses are from the Canadian Forces national investigation service—

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

Can we take a moment to discuss the notice of meeting that was posted yesterday? Some things can be dealt with today after we are done with the witnesses. There's a lot of work that residents expect from us during the constituency weeks, so we all prefer not to lose time.

**The Chair:** Absolutely. Just let me clarify for the committee the reason we are calling for committee business. In the motion for this study, there were specific witnesses listed and we were to have four consecutive meetings. However, some of the witnesses are not available to appear before April 16. We don't have any direction then as to what to do because the additional witnesses we talked about aren't due until Friday.

I need direction from the committee. Do we want to skip the consecutive meetings? Do we want to move forward the deadline for submission of the additional witnesses and start putting those panels together?

I will just go in order here. The next person on the list is Ms. Zahid.

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

I want to talk about the same issue Ms. Sidhu raised. Yesterday we received a notice of a meeting, without any consultation with committee members and during a constituency week. As members

of Parliament, our responsibility is to our constituents. Cutting time out of that would not be advisable.

We had a list of witnesses who were not added to the motion the other day. We can provide that list. I think it should always be there. That way, if some witnesses are not available, we can go down the list.

We can submit to you a list of witnesses at any time you want. Holding a meeting during a constituency week doesn't make sense because it's cutting our time with our constituents. They're in a situation because of this pandemic. They have lots of needs, and as a member of Parliament, they are my responsibility. I already have a lot of meetings planned with my constituents—telephone and Zoom calls—and also with stakeholders. They are looking to us for many answers and I think we should fulfill that commitment. We should look into this issue of holding meetings during constituency weeks.

**The Chair:** Just for your information, I think the clerk has already received a list of some of the additional witnesses that the Liberals would like to get, but we haven't received any from the other parties. Usually they try to ratio it to the membership of the committee.

Ms. Alleslev.

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

I want to stress that we wish to get on with the witnesses today. We only have this one-hour panel for these two very important witnesses. That should be our focus and priority. Many of us are not available at 1 p.m. today, so that would not be the right time to discuss this.

I'm wondering if we could have a meeting to discuss our planning agenda or whatever in the break week. We could deal with all of that then, so that we'll know who we want to call, and in what order, on this important study. We could have an actual meeting dedicated to planning on such an important topic.

**The Chair:** Yes, and just to let the committee know, the reason I put two hours for the meeting on the Tuesday is that, in addition to this study, we actually have a number of other things to consider. We received letters from previous witnesses that we need to discuss. We have the unpaid work study, for which we identified a whole bunch of other witnesses, but we didn't say how many meetings we want to have or what we want to do with those. The same is true on the rural study. That is why we have a lot of things to talk about.

• (1105)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Madam Chair, let's not delay the witnesses' time. I will bring it at the end of the meeting and we will discuss it then. Let's start the meeting.

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

Let's go then to our witnesses. I was in the process of welcoming you, so I'm going to welcome you again.

From the Canadian Forces national investigation service, Lieutenant-Colonel Eric Leblanc, who is the commander.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Chair, I have a point of order.

The sound is extremely bad. It is if I am hearing an echo of the interpretation. I don't know whether I am the only one experiencing this issue.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Can I ask the clerk to check into this?

Is it better? Can you hear me loudly, or is it not good?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** It is better, but it's not completely resolved. I have already had this happen a few times, in this committee, where the sound would be bad and I would hear an echo of the interpretation.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes. I remember you had some difficulties last time. I don't know if the clerk can identify whether the problem is at this end or perhaps on your computer end.

**Mr. Alexandre Roger (Legislative Clerk):** Ms. Gladu, I'm very sorry to interrupt the meeting. I'm Alexandre Roger. I'm helping Stephanie Bond with the committee.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Larouche, I am being told to ask you to unplug your headset and plug it in again, as it would appear that the problem is on your end. We will try this method if you are amenable.

**Mr. Marc Serr  (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** The French interpretation is working well on my end, Madam Chair. I am not hearing an echo.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** I just plugged in my headset again. Let's hope that will resolve the issue.

I'm sorry for this interruption. I yield the floor to the witnesses.

**The Chair:** Okay. We will continue.

[*English*]

From the national defence and Canadian Forces ombudsman office, we have Gregory Lick, who is the ombudsman, and Robyn Hynes, director general of operations.

You each will have five minutes to address the committee. Then we will go into our rounds of questions.

Eric, we will begin with you for five minutes.

**Lieutenant-Colonel Eric Leblanc (Commander, Canadian Forces National Investigation Service):** Madam Chair and committee members, my name is Lieutenant-Colonel Eric Leblanc. I'm commanding officer of the Canadian Forces national investigation service, also known as the CFNIS. The CFNIS, like other military police units, is an independent investigative unit that falls under the command of the Canadian Forces provost marshal.

The CFNIS provides an investigative capability for the purpose of supporting the fair and impartial administration of military justice. Our independence, as laid out in the National Defence Act, enables the conduct of thorough investigations without outside influence.

The primary mandate of the CFNIS is to investigate serious and sensitive criminal and service offences in relation to Department of National Defence property, DND employees and CAF personnel serving in Canada and around the world. We are similar to a civilian police force's major crimes unit. Like all credentialed military police members, the CFNIS has jurisdiction to investigate offences committed on or in relation to defence establishments as well as offences committed by those subject to the code of service discipline, regardless of their rank or status. This jurisdiction exists throughout Canada and the world.

The safety and security of the defence community is our top priority. Every allegation or complaint we receive is reviewed to determine if it meets the CFNIS benchmarks for investigation, and if so, an investigation is launched.

Each case assigned to the CFNIS is unique, but in all cases investigations are conducted to determine the facts, analyze the evidence and lay charges where appropriate.

CFNIS investigators are professional police officers. They receive contemporary police training in areas similar to their civilian partners, often working in consultation or coordination with civilian police, and are, by experience and circumstance, well informed of both military culture and environment. As recently as this month, the CFNIS participated in a large OPP-led operation called Project Weaver, helping dismantle criminal networks in southern Ontario.

In addition to being deployed with CAF operations around the world, CFNIS investigators operate out of six permanent detachments across Canada, with each detachment having, amongst other capabilities, a sexual offence response team, known as SORT.

SORT teams were stood up as a direct result of the recommendations brought forth in the Madame Deschamps report from 2015. The SORT increases the ability of the CFNIS to protect and support victims of sexually based offences by identifying, investigating and helping prosecute persons responsible for criminal sexual offences. They, and all CFNIS members, have specialized training in sexual assault investigations, including training on employing a trauma-informed approach.

The CFNIS also operates their own victim services program, which acts as a referral service between victims, survivors and the various support resources they may need. While CFNIS investigations, at a minimum, collect all reasonably available evidence bearing on the guilt or innocence of any person who is subject of the investigation, victim considerations are always at the forefront.

CFNIS investigators remain under my command at all times, regardless of where they are employed within Canada or abroad. As their commanding officer, I am well aware that CFNIS investigators take pride in ensuring their investigative responsibilities are conducted in a professional manner and that they recognize the importance of their work at all times.

I would like to thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak with you all today. I look forward to answering any of your questions.

• (1110)

**The Chair:** Excellent.

We'll now move to Robyn or Gregory, I'm not sure which.

You have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Gregory Lick (Ombudsman, National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman):** Good morning, Madam Chair and committee members.

[*Translation*]

This is my first time appearing before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

The issue of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces is not new. It is, however, newly at the forefront of public consciousness and the subject of study of both this committee and the Standing Committee on National Defence.

I think that we all agree that there is a need to collectively find a way forward to finally stamp out this problem and ensure that members can trust that their complaints and concerns will be dealt with in earnest.

[*English*]

There have been conflicting statements in recent weeks regarding the role of my office in addressing complaints of sexual misconduct within the military. I would like to provide clarity on this matter today.

First, my office does not have authority to investigate criminal offences of sexual assault. Neither does it have authority to investigate sexual misconduct matters that would result in charges under the code of service discipline.

Second, I must stress that my office cannot and will not investigate matters without the consent of the complainant, no matter the nature of the complaint. In my predecessor's testimony before the Standing Committee on National Defence, we heard that the complainant did not wish to be identified and did not wish to pursue an investigation, but hoped that the information could be brought to the attention of someone who could effect change.

Third, the current reporting structure of the ombudsman is directly to the Minister of National Defence, not to the Privy Council Office or any other body. This is a critical point that needs to be made in order to correct the record. Had I been faced with the same facts, I would have done exactly as my predecessor did. I would have reported the facts within my direct reporting structure. There was no other body to which the matter could have been referred—this is particularly important—given what we know of the member's wishes.

Regardless of the solutions proposed to address culture change or to ensure that survivors come forward, I would hope that they would take into account several important points. In specific cases of sexual misconduct, it is crucial that victims have control over how and when their complaint moves forward. Victims must be empowered to make their own choices about what steps to take next. As Justice Marie Deschamps said in her 2015 report, “victims should not have to bear the burden of the complaint process”.

Victims of sexual misconduct must not fear reprisal or possible career consequences for making their complaints. This is not a new problem, nor is it limited solely to sexual misconduct. It applies to all forms of misconduct and unfairness in the armed forces. Victims are less likely to feel safe coming forward without the assurance that their complaints will be dealt with by a mechanism that is free of outside interference or control. This is why there needs to be a mechanism external to the chain of command and any other vested interest, political or administrative.

[*Translation*]

My office was established more than 20 years ago outside of the chain of command, but with administrative ties to the department and reporting to a minister of the party in power. We have been making the argument for full independence since our creation, but there has been no political will to act. This issue of sexual misconduct is an unfortunate illustration of how constituents fall between de cracks of a closed system with no fully independent recourse mechanisms.

We have heard bits and pieces of information in the media and in testimony before committees that consideration is being given to creating a new and independent mechanism to address matters of this type. However, there have been no details about what this will look like. For the record, my office has not been consulted.

Whatever approach is taken, the body that addresses this issue must have full administrative independence, be external to the chain of command, have a legislated mandate and a direct reporting relationship with Parliament. Anything short of this will not provide victims with the assurances they need to come forward and have these matters dealt with.

• (1115)

[English]

My colleague Ms. Robyn Hynes and I stand ready to take questions from the committee, Madam Chair.

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

We'll start with our first set of questions.

We're beginning with Ms. Alleslev for six minutes.

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

Thank you to both witnesses for this important testimony.

I would like to ask Lieutenant-Colonel LeBlanc a question.

Can you let us know how and when you begin an investigation?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Thank you for the question.

In terms of receiving an investigation, there are a few different avenues that a report can be made to the CFNIS. I could receive a direct tasking from the Canadian Forces provost marshal or direct contact from a victim or a witness to an event. Also, through units' chains of command, we could receive a call from a unit.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** The chain of command could include the chief of the defence staff or the Minister of National Defence.

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Anybody within the chain of command who has a report to make can make a report to us.

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

How do you know if an investigation has been tampered with?

We've heard in the news, from the media, that some investigations have been tampered with by those who are perhaps complicit or wanting to get a different outcome. How would you know if an investigation has been tampered with?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Thank you for the question.

For us, everything is compartmentalized within an investigation. What I mean by that is that the actual process of investigating stays within the unit, my unit, the CFNIS. Once we hit the point where we're ready to proceed with charges or not, if those charges happen to be through the military justice system, there may be some units involved of the subjects of the investigation.

I, as well as everybody here, am aware of the reports in the media. I can speak from experience that—

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Are you saying that they are false?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** It would be inappropriate for me to contest somebody who is not here, but I can speak about my experience.

My experience has been that, when unit chains of command have heard of a victim coming forward, they are asking us for information about the file in front of them, generally with the best intent of supporting the victim. My unit has the unique position where we need to balance the right of the victim to have privacy with the right of a chain of command to know.

Generally speaking, if the unit has not been made aware, it's really the choice of the victim of an investigation to make that unit aware. We typically don't provide any information.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** It is possible for an investigation to have been tampered with by people in the chain of command.

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** A chain of command can ask us questions but we don't provide them with information, so no.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** We also understand from media reports that some critical testimony and evidence have been lost in sexual misconduct and assault investigations, resulting in charges not being laid or the investigation being stopped.

Is that accurate?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** I read the same media report that you're referring to. While I don't want to speak to individual cases and where the issues are—

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** I'm not asking for specifics. I'm asking if it has ever occurred.

• (1120)

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Do you keep track, a record, of how many times that happens?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** How many times an error has occurred in an investigation?

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Yes, and when critical evidence is lost, resulting in charges not being laid or whatever.

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** We have records, I guess, of complaints.

If there are complaints about a specific investigation, or generally investigations, there are processes in place. Internally, there's a professional standards organization that is charged with reviewing investigations that are ongoing. There's also the Military Police Complaints Commission, which is a quasi-judicial body—

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Those are complaints. I'm talking about auditing and the loss of critical evidence and testimony.

Do you keep a record of how many times that happens? Is there a report that identifies how many times critical evidence and testimony have been lost?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** We have no specific report like that. We have a quality assurance process whereby senior members of the unit are charged with reviewing ongoing and concluded investigations for any error or any opportunities to really develop and get better.

However, no, there's nothing specific in one place that would identify all of those things.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Is it possible that, in some cases, the right outcome or the just outcome may have been compromised?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** In terms of an outcome at a judicial process, it's really beyond just the CFNIS. It's also any other police service that played a role in the collecting of evidence, and also the court's handling of its own evidence as well.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** In 2015, the previous government asked the CFNIS to investigate the possible allegations against General Vance, for his time both in Gagetown—a rumour about some occurrence—and an actual occurrence in Naples.

Can you tell us that, in both those instances, all the witnesses in those locations, officers who had been posted there at the time, were contacted as part of the investigation?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Again, because this is speaking about a specific investigation, there are laws in place that prevent—

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** I'm not looking for names.

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** I'm just looking to make sure that all of the potential witnesses were contacted as part of the investigation.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. That's your time.

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

**The Chair:** We're going now to the Liberals for six minutes.

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

Good morning to everyone and thanks to both the witnesses for their important testimony today.

My first question is for Lieutenant-Colonel Leblanc. I would like to know the process. Can you please clarify the process that begins your unit's involvement in any investigations? Can you provide some details on that? That would be great.

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Thank you for the question.

On the overall process for coming in, I think I spoke to that. There are a few different avenues where folks can refer a complaint to us. That could come from an individual who's affected—a victim, a witness. It could come from a unit or any member of the chain of command, or anyone who calls us, quite frankly.

It could get passed directly from the Canadian Forces provost marshal as well. I guess a fifth avenue, perhaps, is if an investigator uncovers another crime as part of an ongoing investigation. They may open up an investigation into that.

Once receipt of a complaint occurs, then we need to validate the complaint. Validating the complaint means we need to make sure that what's coming in is criminal or a serious service offence and that it meets our benchmarks for investigation. As we are a major crime unit, that means some lower-level offences might be handed over to another military police unit or perhaps even a unit investigation, if it doesn't meet the threshold for a CFNIS investigation.

• (1125)

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Is there a process or protocol in place that would protect the integrity of a proper and thorough investigation as well as all the members involved? Specifically, I would like to know this. While the investigation is ongoing, how can you protect the people involved and ensure that they are not marginalized?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** I can talk about the technicality of how we preserve.... We have our own policing database that's accessible to most police officers in the Canadian Armed Forces. However, internally, as a major crimes unit, we protect that information from anybody accessing it through access control measures. People have different categories or levels of access to that information while it's ongoing. We're physically housed separately from any other military police units, so our regional offices are in different buildings than other folks and are controlled by us.

Those are some of the ways that we protect the information. When we receive calls, there are certain points in time where information is given out. We give out information to affected victims periodically, as the investigation progresses. That doesn't mean, step by step, it will be laid out. It means that the overall progress and general sense as to where we're headed will be communicated.

A subject's chain of command, typically towards the end, will be advised of the investigation. At times, if there are operational impacts, then they may be apprised of an investigation, but they're limited in information to knowing just that it's ongoing. We don't actually communicate the steps that we're investigating.

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

I will share my time with my colleague, Ms. Vandenberg.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much, and thank you very much to the witnesses. I'd like to specifically ask Mr. Lick some questions.

It's good to see you again. I know that we previously had a meeting where we talked, and you gave some very concrete suggestions about independence and the structure, and I very much appreciate your giving that advice and continuing those conversations.

I would like to ask specifically about your role versus the sexual misconduct response centre's, the SMRC's. My understanding is that has been in place since 2017. Would you be the primary place somebody would go if they needed support with regard to an allegation of sexual misconduct or would you refer it to the SMRC?

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** We can receive a complaint of sexual misconduct and that is the right of every member of the military or the department as well, civilians as well, but in this case, as I said before, we do not have the mandate or authority to investigate or to take forward anything that is a criminal matter such as sexual assault, or a sexual misconduct matter or situation that would fall under the code of service discipline.

I would like to ask Ms. Hynes just to elaborate a bit more on the details of how we do handle a complaint that comes forward to us.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** I know that my time is limited, but if she or you could answer this specifically. If something is criminal, though, you would refer that to the CFNIS or to the provost marshal, I would assume, since you don't have that investigative authority. If somebody wanted support, counselling, wanted to know what avenues were open, you would refer them to the SMRC, I would imagine, since those are more specifically tailored to its mandate.

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** I certainly must stress, Ms. Vandenberg, that my office cannot go to any external body without the consent of the complainant. That's the most important part in this whole discussion.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Yes, we've heard that as well.

In terms of consent, though, if you knew that the PCO wanted...would you have told the complainant that there—

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

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

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Barsalou-Duval now has the floor for six minutes.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My first question is for Mr. Lick.

We know that a chief of staff was at the head of the Canadian Forces for two years while under allegations of a sexual nature. We also know that your predecessor contacted the Minister of National Defence, Mr. Sajjan, to call his attention to the situation, but that the minister did not want to take it into account or meet with your predecessor on the issue.

The minister claims to have done so to avoid being accused of meddling with the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as not to undermine the independence of the processes. Do you think that would have been the case?

• (1130)

[English]

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** We have to remember, in this particular situation, the wishes of the member in this case. I report directly to the Minister of National Defence. My predecessor did as well, obviously. He brought the particular issue—it was still confidential—to the minister and tried to have a conversation, as we understand it.

As I said, I would have done the same thing knowing the circumstances and the wishes of the member at that time. Therefore, in this—

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** What I would like to know more specifically is whether you think the minister would have been interfering had he met with your predecessor and been given the information.

[English]

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** In this particular case I do not believe that it would be interference. My predecessor, as he has stated, was asking for advice in that regard. I was not aware of the particular discussion that happened, other than what has been stated publicly. In this case, he was asking for advice.

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Had the minister decided, for instance, to begin an investigation on the matter in question or on the chief of staff in a more general way, do you think his decision would have been considered as interference or as detrimental to the independence of the Canadian Armed Forces?

[English]

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** In this particular situation, the member asked for confidentiality, as we understand it.

The member, as we understand it, did not wish to go forward with an investigation, and also the member wanted to see what could be changed. That was the issue of the conversation that happened, as we understand, publicly.

At that particular point, I don't believe that person was asking for an investigation to be started. They were really looking for what could change.

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** I understand, but after all, the chief of defence staff is suspected of sexual misconduct. I think this is serious enough for the issue to be considered in depth. As the chief of staff is the highest ranking officer, if he were found guilty of those actions, the entire Canadian Armed Forces could be compromised.

Beyond the will of the person themselves, the minister also has some responsibility in the matter, don't you agree?

[English]

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** Absolutely, and I certainly agree that it is a very serious matter that needs to be properly investigated. However, at the time the allegations were brought forward, that was not the member's wish.

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Leblanc, as far as we understand, the minister refused to review that information. Had he done so and then turned to you to ask you to conduct an investigation, would that have been considered as interference in the army's internal business?

[English]

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** In terms of interference as it applies to the CFNIS, if I understand correctly, in order to start an investigation... Asking me to examine and look at something would not be interference. Interference would be improper conduct during the investigation as it relates to the CFNIS.



[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Mr. LeBlanc, did the office of the minister, in 2018 or after, ask you to look into this, to obtain information or to see whether it was relevant to do so? I actually don't know whether you were in office at the time, so I am talking about a request that may have been made to you or to your predecessor.

• (1135)

[*English*]

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** I've been in this position since May 2020, so as far as I'm aware, I have no information.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** So you don't know whether the minister's office or the minister himself contacted your service to ask it to learn more about the situation.

I understand that the ombudsman does not have the power to let you know there is a problem, as he is not part of the chain of command. Do you think that is a problem?

[*English*]

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** From my time or my experience within the CFNIS—and I can't speak for the ombudsman—I can say that, in the past, investigators from their office have coordinated with our office when there was a desire for a criminal investigation.

That has happened in the past but only when there was a desire.

**The Chair:** Now we're going to Ms. Mathysen for six minutes.

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

Thank you to the witnesses.

To you, Mr. Lick, the ombudsman has no authority when it comes to criminal investigations. That's clear, and you said you would have done exactly the same thing your predecessor did.

Interestingly, when we had the minister before the committee two days ago, I asked him if he provided advice to your predecessor that he could have gone to the SMRC. He said that he did tell the ombudsperson to go to the SMRC.

As I understand it, though, the SMRC isn't the correct place for you to go. Because you did not have the authority to do so, that wouldn't have been the correct path for Mr. Walbourne to take, just to be clear.

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** Yes. Let me clarify things a bit in that regard.

The member who brought the complaint forward likely would have been provided with the information on what recourse mechanisms were available to them, including what support would be available to them through the SMRC. The SMRC is not an investigative body. It does not investigate complaints. It is primarily there, in this particular situation, to provide support and information to members who suffer sexual misconduct or sexual assault.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** You mentioned in your opening statement that there is no political will to make a change in the reporting mechanism, so right now you can only report to the minister.

Would it be helpful to you, as a change, to report to Parliament as a whole, as many other ombudspersons and commissioners do? Is that what you're looking for? Could you explain exactly what may help in this situation?

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** The primary issue in this issue of the day around sexual misconduct in the military is what will provide victims, survivors and even witnesses with the confidence and comfort level to come forward with their allegations and have them addressed properly without any political or administrative vested interest interfering in that. That is the most important question that I think committees are dealing with today.

In my very strong opinion, the only way we can provide the level of confidence and comfort that allows victims, survivors and even witnesses to come forward is by having an external body that is completely independent. Normally in this case it would be reporting directly to Parliament. That is what we owe these victims and survivors.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** One of the problems, which came from testimony by Mr. Walbourne at the defence committee, is that after he brought the complaint forward and the minister refused to hear it and they had that exchange, there were fewer and fewer meetings. Many were cancelled.

When you took over the role, could you say, on average, that you had regular meetings with the minister? Have you had the same issues or has it been okay?

• (1140)

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** I have certainly not had the issues that my predecessor experienced. The minister and I, at this point, have a very respectful and professional relationship. We meet probably between quarterly and semi-annually for various issues, particularly the systemic investigations that we are carrying out.

If there was an issue of more urgency that required me to meet with the minister, I would ask for that meeting and address it with him at that time.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** If this were to change and it were to be reported to Parliament, how do you see that moving forward?

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** It would be very similar to the other commissioners and individuals who are reporting to Parliament or have an officer of Parliament arrangement. It is still in the manner of...

As an investigation or a review occurs, depending on the mandate an organization has, you would come forward with recommendations to the department, usually through the minister, on what should occur. I expect that would be very similar to what would happen if we created or developed an independent agency that would address complaints of sexual misconduct. It would not be one that has an order-making power. With respect to orders over the military, I think that would be inappropriate.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** I'll note one of the key issues here, and I don't know how to get beyond it. Maybe I can't do it in 30 seconds. There is such an entrenched "don't ask, don't tell" knowledge that if you say anything against a superior officer or anyone else, you will be blacklisted and thought of as a snitch.

Maybe you can address this in other questions or maybe we can get back to it when I have more time, but how do we start to really get at the trust level? Is it through education?

This is directed to both witnesses.

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

Now we're going into our second round of questions.

We'll go to Ms. Wong for five minutes.

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

I'd like to, first of all, thank all the witnesses who appear before us today for this very important study.

I'd like to continue asking the question that Ms. Alleslev started.

In 2015, when the previous government requested you—I'm addressing Lieutenant-Colonel Leblanc—to investigate allegations pertaining to General Vance and the relationship he had during his time in Naples, did the investigation interview all of the officers who were posted there at that time? I don't think you had time to reply last time.

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** No, absolutely. I guess my response would be the same. To speak about the specifics of an investigation is not appropriate, and I wouldn't get into what we did or didn't do throughout the investigation.

I will tell you that a complaint was received, an investigative assessment was conducted and a report was distributed from it.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** That means that you will not be able to just give a nay or yea as to whether they were interviewed. We don't want names, just whether those who were posted there were interviewed. This is just a yes or no question.

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** I'm not authorized to release parts of an investigation or the steps that were or were not taken.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Okay.

I'll go on to my next question, which might be similar, but then it's a different case. Again, when in 2015 you were asked to look into a rumour pertaining to misconduct by General Vance during his time in Gagetown, were all the officers posted there interviewed?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** I don't believe we were.... I'm just looking at my notes here. The CFNIS, I don't believe, was asked to look at that specific allegation.

• (1145)

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Okay, so you weren't even given the task to do so.

The media has reported that the minister had directed that the investigation into the navy "red room" incident be reopened. Is that correct, and how did you receive this direction?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** I'm aware of the "red room" and the unit disciplinary investigation. I think it's probably a good point to advise that the investigation was conducted by the navy. The stuff that I'm aware of is from the media, probably the same as you. Nothing has been referred to my unit for investigation at this time.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** Again, about the relation between you and the ombudsman, can the ombudsman direct you to conduct an investigation?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** To be clear, nobody outside of the provost marshal can direct me to conduct an investigation. Folks can report an allegation to us, and then we'll decide whether or not we proceed with an investigation.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** As the commander of the Canadian Forces national investigation service, you are a Lieutenant-Colonel. How does that affect your ability to investigate allegations against colonels, generals and admirals?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** It's a good question. It's one that has been asked from time to time. You see me in a uniform today, but my investigators and I don't wear a uniform from day to day. There is no threat to promotion or postings or anything from the work that they do, because the folks we're investigating really have no control over that. That's internal.

Everything we do is protected from influence in that it's all steered through the Canadian Forces provost marshal. We work directly for the provost marshal and not for the chain of command.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** That's pretty good to know.

I would like to ask the ombudsman, Mr. Lick, a couple of questions.

I might have told you before, but I might not—

**The Chair:** Alice, I'm sorry, but you're out of time.

Now I believe we're going to Ms. Sidhu for five minutes.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses who are joining us today.

My first questions are for Colonel Leblanc. In your answers, I want you to focus on women and, generally, on survivors.

Can you discuss why it is important for your investigations to remain neutral and independent?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Absolutely. There's always a balance. The institution, even through best efforts, wants to support victims. However, at times, victims might not want that. They might not want their unit or folks they're working with to understand it until a public court appearance.

Part of what we're doing to make sure that it's known is following the spirit of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, even though it doesn't apply to defence, and in doing so, being ready to follow the same spirit for Bill C-77 when it comes into force.

My unit specifically over the last two years has been working towards civilianizing our victim service delivery program, bringing in civilians where we can assign them on a certain level of training to be able to deliver that forward.

On top of that, we've added an additional victim services program manager who will be hired in the coming months. That person will work with and seek some secondment training through the SM-RC, and in Ontario, through VWAP, which is the provincial court system victim services program, so that we can really leverage the best of what's out there and move towards achieving greater standards of services.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you.

How do you ensure that the process is a trauma-informed approach and encourages members to come forward?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** That's a good question. There are two parts.

Public discourse such as what's happening right now is very important, because I can tell you, there's certainly an increase in folks coming forward to the CFNIS. To me, although the focus of public discourse is on the problem areas, specific to the CFNIS I can say that it's truly good to see that folks have the confidence in us and are coming forward.

In terms of a trauma-informed approach, when we host our basic indoctrination course for new investigators, we bring them in for about a week every year. We deliver training there. Sometimes it's internal. This year, we brought in Dr. Haskell to deliver the trauma-informed approach, as well as one of the provincial police colleges to bridge the theoretical to the practical.

We also every year send folks on training with the U.S. criminal investigation division, which is a U.S. Army military police civilianized force, to accept FETI training. FETI is forensic experiential trauma-informed interviewing, which is a different way and tool in the tool box when dealing with victims of complex and heinous crimes.

• (1150)

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you, Colonel.

Madam Chair, I would like Ms. Vandenberg to finish the questions she was going to ask earlier.

Thank you.

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

I just want to finish my last question for Mr. Lick.

As we know now, having gone to the minister—and we've even heard from Stephen Harper's chief of staff—the only appropriate thing for the minister to do is to go to PCO, which then has the whole of government and can see where it should go next.

If PCO contacted you, especially on something as serious as the chief of the defence staff, would you have then gone back to the victim, said that PCO wanted an investigation and see if you could get the permission?

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** That is generally the approach we take with any complaint coming forward. We will inform them of what can be done. If we then go forward with their permission to proceed with a particular way of doing things, we would always come back to them to tell them what was the approach provided or what happened. Then they can make an informed decision about how to go forward.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** Presumably, that may have occurred.

If the person then says, no, they don't want to, especially if it's something like an email, would there have been anything more that PCO could have done at that point, given that there was no permission? We know we have to make it better and safer for victims to come forward, but without having that permission, without having that information, could PCO even have investigated further at that point?

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** That's a question you would have to ask PCO. That's not a question for me. I can't really comment on their particular process.

**The Chair:** Now we're going to go to Monsieur Barsalou-Duval.

[Translation]

Go ahead for six and a half minutes.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is for Mr. Leblanc.

Earlier, a colleague asked you whether your rank of lieutenant-colonel put you in a unique situation if you had to conduct an investigation involving a higher ranking officer. I would like to expand on that.

If your service decided to investigate a general or the chief of staff, what would happen in concrete terms? Would you have the power to go into those people's office, to seize documents and to force them to answer your questions? Would there be barriers to your work?

[English]

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Thank you for the question.

I guess there are a few parts to answer here. One is the unique position the CFNIS is in. Under the Queen's regulations and orders, which is how we operate, and the National Defence Act, there are certain folks who are authorized to pursue charges.

The CFNIS is the only institution that can pursue both criminal and service offence charges. We can investigate under the Criminal Code, but also under the code of service discipline, whereas a unit level can only look at one or the other.

As it applies to general officers—and my unit has quite a few investigations we've done in the past and present on general officers—they don't fall within our chain of command as it relates to policing. There's really no fear of reprisal. Other than advising the provost marshal that we have a complaint, as far as it relates to how we investigate, that doesn't change. We're still gathering the evidence, comparing it against whatever service offence or criminal offence is there, seeing if it meets the elements and seeking advice as required along the way, so that really doesn't change.

• (1155)

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval:** Okay. That answers my question.

When he was appointed, General Vance had already had allegations levelled against him, or there were at least rumours, and your service was put in charge of investigating the matter. However, it appears that the investigation was inconclusive.

What would have helped that investigation be conclusive?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm very sorry, but that's the end of your time.

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

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

Just to pick up from where I got cut off before, in terms of that toxic culture, how do you start to really get at it? It is so pervasive. I've even heard that it's not just about sexual harassment. It's about harassment in general, where women are punished in a harder fashion with physical punishment. They have to do more exercises than their male counterparts.

Also, how do you deal with a toxic culture when it's within an organization that is supposed to be independent, like the military police?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** For us, again, we go back to the reasons we're here. Whenever we receive a report about abuse of authority—I suspect we're talking about a lot of things in the bigger picture, but for that specifically, as it relates to us—it's really a matter of receiving the report, following the evidence as it leads us and determining whether or not it supports a charge.

In terms of the overall Canadian Armed Forces, I would defer to the chief of the defence staff, who has spoken, I believe, on this issue. In terms of institutional change, that's really beyond the scope of what I do. We really just focus on the criminal and service offences.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Maybe, Mr. Lick, you can address this too. If you are the ones in charge of that trust, of that institutional change, but you are also within it, how are we supposed to move that change? What are the answers that you see here? Is it, again, through that education?

I asked the CDS, but it has to be more than half an hour every year or one week per year. It has to be constant.

**Mr. Gregory Lick:** That's a very broad question. For me, in my role as ombudsman, with my team, there are two points I would like to make.

One is that there is a lot of internal change within the armed forces—through training, education, everything like that—that needs to go on and continue to go on, and be improved and maybe do it differently. That is what they need to do.

The other part of it is that people who, in the end, suffer a situation such as misconduct or sexual misconduct need to have the confidence to come forward and know that their allegations will be addressed without reprisal and without any career repercussions. Ultimately, given the command and control structure of the military, something like that needs to be external to the department and to the military in order for people to have the comfort level to come forward. That is ultimately what we owe those victims.

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

Ms. Alleslev, take us to the end of our time.

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

Colonel Leblanc, on the “red room” navy investigation, you have not been engaged in that. It's a navy investigation. Therefore, it is not an independent investigation. Is that correct?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** I can't speak to the independence—yes or no—of the investigation, because I'm not the one conducting it.

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

You also stated in your earlier testimony that no one can direct an investigation except the provost marshal. The chief of the defence staff, the vice-chief of the defence staff and the minister, can none of them direct that an investigation be conducted?

**LCol Eric Leblanc:** Folks can come to our unit. There is a section within the NDA that allows the VCDS to issue an instruction, but I have yet to see it happen.

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

**The Chair:** That's very good. Unfortunately, we've come to the end of the time.

I want to thank the witnesses. This was excellent testimony. I appreciate your coming and the work that you do and your service.

We're going to suspend momentarily while we do the sound check for the next panel.

• (1200) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1201)

**The Chair:** We'll continue with our study.

We're very happy today to welcome Marie Deschamps, a former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada.

Madam Deschamps, you will have five minutes for your remarks, and then we'll go to our rounds of questions. You may begin.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Marie Deschamps (Former Justice, Supreme Court of Canada, As an Individual):** Thank you for the invitation.

I greatly value your committee's work. I actually used it as inspiration when I was drafting my report.

During my previous appearances before the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence and before the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence, I mainly insisted on the responsibilities the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre should have had, in my opinion. I am specifically talking about the authority needed to receive complaints and reports, be they confidential or not. I also insisted on the need to support victims throughout the process, including the process used to discipline the perpetrator. I also insisted on the expertise the centre should have to be able to assist the Canadian Armed Forces in terms of training programs. Finally, I especially insisted on the fact that it would be important for the centre to act as the central point of data collection. In fact, without data, we will never know what is happening in terms of sexual assault or sexual harassment.

Today, I would rather like to talk to you about something else.

[English]

There are two other issues that I discussed in my report but on which I never insisted. The first is leadership. It is a very well-known management rule that without personal engagement of the senior leadership, there will be no change of culture. I made that point in my report.

I'll read the first sentence of section 4.4.2, which I titled "Proactive Leadership":

In order to bring about cultural change in an organization, and to reduce the occurrence of sexual harassment and sexual assault, it is essential that senior leaders, and particularly those with general oversight responsibilities, become directly engaged in cultural reform.

As soon as August 2015, the then chief of the defence staff issued an operation order in which he stated that he would establish a global strategy and an action plan for responding to sexual misconduct. I thought my message had been heard, but it took more than five years before we got to see this global strategy. I have already made some comments on this strategy. Amongst my other comments, I said that I thought it lacked concrete measures. Apparently, this is in the action plan, but the action plan, I understand, is not public.

I want to repeat here that without strong engagement from the senior leaders, the armed forces culture will not change. The years that passed only made it more difficult to restore the trust in the leadership. I can only hope that the new leaders will have understood the situation and will rise to the challenge. That's my point on leadership.

My second point concerns the lack of clarity of the policies and procedures on intimate relationships. That, I understand, was mentioned by the current acting chief of the defence staff. On that issue, I refer to section 6.2 of my report, where I expressed the view that the policies needed to be clarified to address more explicitly the power imbalance, including by creating an administrative presumption that where the relationship is not properly disclosed, the relationship should be considered to be an adverse personal relationship.

• (1205)

To my knowledge, the policy on personal relationships—that's DAOD 5019-1—has not been changed.

[Translation]

The text of that policy is a source of confusion. The organizational structure of the Canadian Armed Forces is the reason behind an inherent risk of abuse of power. That is what my recommendation on the presumption of harmful relationships was intended to remedy. I can only note that there appeared to be a lack of will to change in 2015. I hope the message is now clear.

I am available to answer your questions.

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

[English]

We'll start with Ms. Alleslev.

You have six minutes.

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

First and foremost, thank you so much, Madam Deschamps, for all the work you've done for many years. We truly would be lost without your research and perspective. Thank you very much.

I wonder if I could start for a moment with the legal aspects around the Minister of National Defence. Is it your opinion that he has the authority and the responsibility to ensure that good order, discipline and all conduct rules are enforced, investigations occur, results are reported back and offenders are held accountable?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I'm sorry, but I'm hesitant to give any legal opinion in this forum. Obviously, the minister is the head of the organization, and I think—

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Even if we're not looking at a legal opinion, Canadians—

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** Your question is a legal question, and it calls for a legal opinion. I was told that I was here to comment on my report. If I'm drawn to other fora, I'm sorry; I prefer not to engage in it. I leave it to others.

In the previous committee that I participated in, a number of witnesses were willing to give their legal opinion on that. I prefer not to engage in this, just as I fend off all media requests because it all leads to this kind of question.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Thank you. It was only because you talked about the critical need for senior leaders to engage.

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** Yes.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** I think Canadians would say that the minister is the most senior of senior leaders. If no one is accountable to ensure that this culture change occurs, then we feel somewhat adrift as to whether we'll ever be able to achieve a culture change, but I respect....

In terms of senior leadership, do we not need them to get engaged? Do we not also need to ensure that they are without fault? They won't have credibility to change the culture if they, themselves, have been complicit in this behaviour in the past. Do you see that as a stumbling block in terms of the culture change in the military?

• (1210)

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** Senior leaders must be role models. In the commercial environment, I'm sure that you know that many organizations have as a rule that there can be absolutely no intimate relationships with staff, never mind their rank. Many CEOs have lost their jobs over this kind of issue. It's still my view that senior leaders must act as role models.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** If they haven't been, then perhaps we need to look at doing something to ensure that the senior leaders that we have are. Is that what you're suggesting?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** We need to ensure that we have good leaders who can act as role models.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** In terms of the lack of clarity on intimate relationships and why.... It's hard to understand why when you clearly outline that this aspect of the code of discipline needs to be clarified, and I'm understanding that it's a source of confusion, but it also could, perhaps, be a source of abuse. I'm wondering if you could explain why that is so important.

I asked a previous witness this: How would you know if something is consensual or not when it's a senior leader and a junior, particularly in such a hierarchically strong organization like the military?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** Personal relationships are very difficult to address in all kinds of settings. In a large organization of 100,000 people where people live together and where many people are single, it's very difficult to impose a complete ban. There must be limits imposed in order to protect those who may be vulnerable.

This is why I indicated that, to me, the avenue for solving this issue was to start with the premise that the relationship can be abusive, so start with a presumption of a prejudicial personal relationship. In their jargon, that's what they call an "adverse" relationship. However, the way it was solved was through disclosure.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Yes. I don't have much time, but would it be possible, in your opinion, to have a complete ban of intimate relationships for, let's say, the general officer rank because they are held to a much higher standard? It might just be a consequence of being a general.

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** With regard to intimate relationships, it depends—and I don't want to contemplate every single situation—but if the two people are single, if they are willing, if the relationship is disclosed.... That's why I stayed away from complete bans. These people have their lives to live, so a complete ban I'm very afraid of. That is why I didn't go there.

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

**The Chair:** Now we're going to go to Ms. Dhillon for six minutes and a little bit extra.

[Translation]

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

Mrs. Deschamps, I am really pleased to see you here. I followed your career and your work with great interest over the years. Thank you for participating in our committee today to discuss this extremely important topic.

Your report mentions that hundreds of individuals collaborated on your review. Could you tell the committee what major concerns could have dissuaded members of the Canadian Armed Forces from breaking the silence?

I would ask that you answer this question very briefly. Thank you.

• (1215)

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** There are a number of them. I actually talk about them in my report. The largest concern is definitely a fear of reprisals. Victims are afraid of suffering reprisals not only from the chain of command, but also from members of their unit. A unit is seen as a small family. If a complaint is filed against a member of the unit, there may be a ripple effect where the other members of the unit would act as a shield for the perpetrator. When that is the case, the victim ends up being thrown out of the group. That is why we must work at all levels.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** The majority of people who enrol in the army have a desire to serve their country. Despite all the reporting and all the horror stories, women should not hesitate or not join the Canadian Armed Forces if that is their dream.

How could we increase the feeling of safety among women who want to enrol in the Canadian Armed Forces and so encourage more women to do that?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** That is a very general question. In fact, it is the main question. Women must absolutely be part of the Armed Forces. They are contributing members of society, and the Armed Forces need them at all levels.

As I suggest in my report, to attract women into the army, they must be made to feel like they have a future there. Very often, women in the army feel that their career tops out at the rank of major. I have spoken to women who were of that opinion. There were practically no models of women ranked higher than major. So we need models proving to women that they have a future in the army and that their career can progress there. I see that women will finally be appointed to command positions, and I find that encouraging.

However, the responsibility does not lie only with senior leaders, but also with non-commissioned officers. All those people must help women climb the ladder, give them responsibilities and think of them when they delegate duties. Women must feel that they have their place in the army, and that responsibility belongs to all members of the Canadian Armed Forces, across all ranks.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Could you tell us a bit about intersectionality? For example, is a woman who is part of the LGBTQ2+ community more exposed to harassment because of her minority status? Did you observe any such situations during your investigation?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I heard very little testimony from LGBTQ2+ community members during my review. However, I served for two years as an evaluator during the LGBT purge class action. People may not be as aware of my work in that area. My term is now completed, but I saw during my time that a disproportionate number of women belonging to that community were being treated in an appalling way.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** You say in your report that a toxic and sexualized culture exists within the Canadian Armed Forces.

How can people act in a way so as to create such a toxic environment in an organization where the values of integrity, valour, courage, protection and safeguarding are paramount? What leads to that kind of an environment being created? Were you able to determine that during your review?

I would like you to give us further explanations and tell us what you think about this.

• (1220)

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I talked about that in my report. There is no mystery to those behaviours; they are widespread in predominantly male and hierarchical environments.

When drafting my report, I was inspired by work done in other workplaces with few women, such as security businesses and mines. A masculine culture with prevailing sexuality dominates those environments. As I said in my report, some rules have been established on this. For example, calendars with photos of nude women are now banned.

Minor actions make an environment sexualized. We may be talking about touches that, seemingly—

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. That's your time on that question.

Now we're going to move to Madam Larouche.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead for six minutes.

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

A big thank you to former Justice Deschamps for being with us this morning.

Mrs. Deschamps, I join with my colleagues in recognizing all the work you have done in this file to denounce those cases of sexual assault. We were all traumatized by the Noémi Mercier and Alec Castonguay article published in 2015 following your investigation. Even at the time, it gave us chills.

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** They brought the issue to light first.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** In the article I found, Noémi Mercier and Alec Castonguay at the very least mentioned your work, so you were looking into the matter at roughly the same time. You were conducting your investigation when they published their article. It was indeed them who shone a spotlight on the issue; they were behind it all. I applaud them and I applaud you. The article was very compelling and impactful.

It was reported in the paper this morning that the program introduced to stamp out sexual misconduct in the armed forces—Operation Honour—had been scrapped. How do you feel about that? When the chief of the defence staff made the announcement, was he planning to shut down Operation Honour? Does it mean that the program was ineffective, that it failed? Or is the leadership trying to put a lid on the issue?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** The first thing I should say is that the program's name, Operation Honour, was denigrated. I won't repeat the mocking nickname it was given.

The armed forces launched the plan in 2015. The first step was to devise a strategy to bring about a change in culture. As I said earlier, it was five years before the strategy was developed. Regardless, the overarching plan of 2015 was called Operation Honour, and the strategy that was developed under step one is now called The Path to Dignity and Respect.

I believe the armed forces still wants to follow the steps it laid out at the time. Now, five years later, the organization is still in the first phase of the action plan, in other words, developing a culture change strategy. The strategy is now written and has been given a name. This is just my own take, but I would say the organization is trying to distance itself from the name Operation Honour, given the mockery that was made of the name.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Originally, then, the name was the same. Thank you.

In your report, you recommended creating an independent body to receive reports of inappropriate sexual conduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. When he appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence, the Minister of National Defence stated that the Government of Canada would establish an independent reporting structure to look at allegations of sexual misconduct.

How can an independent investigative body improve the process of reporting sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces? How can an independent investigative body ensure that the victims of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces and their needs are taken into account?

• (1225)

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** There are two parts to your question.

In my report, I did not address the military justice system because that was not part of my mandate, as you know. It's important, however, to distinguish between a body responsible for receiving complaints and one responsible for conducting investigations.

I recommended that the centre responsible for providing support to victims be independent. As for the independent body responsible for prosecution, I did not see the details, but I don't think it should be commingled with the victims support centre. It should be a completely independent body, in my view.

Keep in mind that, in 1998, responsibility for the prosecution of sexual assault cases was transferred from common law courts to military courts. I see the body in charge of investigation and prosecution as completely separate from the victims support centre [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] where sexual assault complaints could be dealt with. If jurisdiction is not returned to the civilian justice system, an independent body needs to be created. I do worry, though, about simply ending up with a multiplicity of organizations.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** In your view, then—  
[English]

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

We're now going to Ms. Mathysen for six minutes.

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

Thank you, Madam Deschamps.

Everyone has said how incredibly important your work is, and I certainly agree with that.

Despite the incredible work you did, here we are today. Despite that report, despite the Auditor General's report, despite the work of the status of women committee in 2019, I feel we're a bit stalled and we're not getting to what we need to. I think you alluded to that as well.

After you created the report what follow-up occurred with the Canadian Armed Forces?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I remained in contact with Dr. Preston who heads the centre. I tried to maintain communication with her because I wanted to ensure that if she had any questions she had someone to turn to.

I also maintained contact with the chief of the defence staff and with the DM. However, I was not asked to do any follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations. Some kind of follow-up was made by the Auditor General. It may now be time for someone to act as a watchdog more closely.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Despite the fact you are considered such a huge authority on this, you haven't been.... These sound like informal conversations that you are having. You're having great relationships and you're always there for support, but it's not something that is formalized.

Do you think that is something that should be moved forward? Would you recommend that, putting yourself obviously in the centre?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I'm sure you know that I'm not looking for a job.

I can give as an example that in Australia they did a huge review. This was conducted by the head of the human rights commission in Australia, Elizabeth Broderick, who did a super job. Then there was

a follow-up with Ms. Broderick two years later, because there were issues with the equivalent of their military college. She did another complete review.

I think, yes, when something is put in place, there has to be someone to look over their shoulder to make sure that things are really happening.

• (1230)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Yes, because only a few of the recommendations have actually been implemented to some degree. That full implementation is still necessary.

The government has said as well that they are trying to create a new, independent body. Have you been contacted about that?

In the previous testimony the ombudsman specifically said that he had not.

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** There were very discreet informal contacts, but nothing is on the record so far.

Also, as I mentioned, I don't think I am the one who should do the job. I voiced my concern. I voiced my recommendations. I think someone else needs to make sure that things are happening. Things may have evolved and someone may have to have fresh eyes on it, but someone should look after it.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Okay.

One of the things that the ombudsman also talked about just before was the necessity for independence. Even within his own office, the fact that he reported directly to the Minister of Defence was clearly a problem. He talked about the ability, like that of many other commissioners, to report to Parliament, and about changing that legislation.

Do you think that would be a welcome step forward?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** The defence ombudsman has very little power.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** In your opinion, would providing that direct access to Parliament help with that situation?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I am not commenting on who the ombudsman should report to, but certainly the way this function is structured is not very helpful.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Okay.

Again, we come back to the difference.... I'm trying to determine the difference between held authority and leadership for that responsibility and the fact that even though.... Authority can be used as a weapon, clearly, in so many instances, and women within the armed forces have seen that.

In terms of moving forward with that leadership and seeing that as very different, I've heard stories more about the generally toxic culture of how things move. It's not even just within sexual misconduct. It's that there are punishments. We've heard about punishments just from a physical punishment standpoint, and how they are almost trying to break women to stop them from advancing.

Can you talk about that?



Also, because I know I have limited time, I will squeeze this in. We could talk about the women who are being brought forward. The minister constantly talks about a pipeline for women to be advanced into leadership roles, which is very important, but I asked the acting chief of the defence staff and I'll ask you about the importance of ensuring that there are supports around those women in those leadership roles. Throughout their careers there are constant attempts to break them. It's harder for them. Their authority is questioned more.

How do we support those women? How do we change that?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, you're out of time again. You have to make your questions more succinct.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** I'm out of time. I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** We will go to Ms. Shin for five minutes in the second round.

**Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much, Madam Deschamps, for appearing today and for your report. It's so refreshing. You speak my language.

As you know, Bill C-3 was passed in Parliament because we see a need to counter culture and systems that victimize women and promote toxic masculinity. Your report is important and our discussions today are important to help bring this cultural shift within the Canadian Armed Forces, but I believe it will also, as it gets resolved, bring change in other sectors of society.

The other day when I was questioning the minister, because I felt he wasn't getting the big picture, I pointed out that the purpose of processes and systems is not to exist for themselves but to help us bring justice and not hinder it. Processes and systems are there ideally to provide an environment that safeguards and maximizes the potential for accountability, integrity and safety to draw out truth and an outcome of justice.

However, if top authorities and leaders like the Minister of Defence are acting in a way or making decisions that are questionable, negligent or insensitive to reality—as the minister is, in my opinion—is there a process whereby those who are in more junior positions can file an appeal against those in higher authority about their decisions?

• (1235)

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I'm not sure what kind of process you're referring to. I can give you a very technical response, which is that, yes, there is an administrative process that goes up to the chief of the defence staff, if you go all the way to the top. There is also an arbitration mechanism, and I'm not sure I'm in the best position to describe what is currently the process and whether you're talking about sexual harassment or sexual assault.

If it's sexual assault, that's for the military justice system. If it's sexual harassment, that's for the administrative system that I described, which goes up to the top. The short answer is, yes, there are mechanisms.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Okay, there are processes. Are they used? Is there push-back? What is the culture in the way these tools are used, whether for harassment or assault?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** For assault, it's the military justice system. For harassment, I've seen various approaches. I've seen in some environments.... I have an example in mind from the navy in which the very high-ranked officer was taking it very seriously, was receiving every day every report and wanted to make sure that the victims were looked after and that the perpetrators were not left alone. In other instances, I've seen pure denial.

It's a very large family. Consistency would be advisable.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** What would happen, then, if the defence minister is at the top and you want to appeal? The top voices are those of the chief of staff. Is there a process for this to happen as well?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I'm not sure that the minister is part of the administrative process. I think it stops at the CDS.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** The problem I'm seeing here and the reason we're here is that systems are blind to the plight of people and the nuances that are human-sensitive, such as gut instincts and unofficial knowledge of background. When leaders or those in position to impact justice ignore, let's say, an elephant in the room, then a culture can't shift.

You mentioned a lot about strong leadership. Strong leaders shouldn't blame the system but should take action that transcends the system, because they put the dignity and well-being of people first. I, along with many who have observed abdication of responsibility with our current defence minister, wouldn't really be here having these long discussions if there were complete confidence.

Would Madam Deschamps be able to comment on whether the minister could demonstrate more convincing commitment to shift the culture of toxic masculinity in the way he is handling all of this so that he is providing leadership that transcends the system?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I'm not sure whether you're asking me to give my opinion on the way the minister is currently acting, which I don't want to comment on. Certainly, however—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. That's your time anyway, so you're off the hook.

We go on to Ms. Hutchings for five minutes.

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

Madam Deschamps, I'm going to echo everything my colleagues have said. I hope you realize what a model you are for young women and girls. What you've done is truly remarkable. We appreciate so much your appearance here today, your expertise and your being able to emphasize the transformational recommendations to protect all women and everyone, all members of the CAF.

Also, your report is so interesting, Madam Deschamps. You talk in your 2015 report about the culture at the CAF and highlight that both men and women “appear to be generally desensitized to the sexualized culture. Officers tend to excuse incidents of inappropriate conduct on the basis that the CAF is [just] a reflection of civilian society.” God, isn't that sad?

Since 2015, our government has taken steps to improve the conditions of Canadians who serve, but it's so clear that more can be done. What will it take, madam, to create that multi-level cultural change?

• (1240)

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** This is the answer that the global strategy was supposed to provide. When I drafted my report, I said that the Canadian Forces needed to come up with a global strategy. I was not in a position to draft such a strategy. I thought they would come up with it and come up with it early. This is not what I have seen. It's difficult for me today to give you tips, because this is not something that can be done overnight.

When I presented my report to the generals, I told them that it would take a generation to accomplish the change. However, we're six years past that presentation, the generation is growing up and it seems that we have accomplished very little.

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

My colleagues and I have often highlighted the importance of having a survivor-centric lens on this committee study into sexual misconduct in the CAF. How can we ensure that the needs of the survivors are respected in every single step of the investigation process for sexual misconduct?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** The following is one of the ideas I came up with. It was not something that I just took out of my head. I had an example from one of the contributors who acted as an advocate.

One very concrete means I had to comfort the victim was that the centre—the independent centre that was supposed to be created—would have on its staff an advocate who could welcome, take care of and stay with survivors from the minute they put their foot in the centre until the very end. The advocate could accompany them to the hearings, contribute to the preparation of their testimony, and ask the police, Crown attorney or the military Crown attorney where the case was at. This would provide victims—survivors—with someone they can call at every minute to ensure that their case is proceeding and their issues are being taken care of.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Thank you, Madam. That's wonderful advice.

Madam Deschamps, you said in your report that it was going to take a few generations of change. Going forward, what would your first steps be to get this process going? What would your advice be?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** Very concretely, we need to have better training, and we need to have men understand that they need to include the women.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** That was so well said, Madam. Thank you so much for your leadership and thank you so much for being here with us today.

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Larouche, we now go to you for two and a half minutes.

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

Mrs. Deschamps, I would like to talk more about the process for handling complaints. The former ombudsman, Gary Walbourne, worries about the new body being a hybrid semi-independent organization, one that would look great on paper but lack the necessary independence.

Are you as pessimistic as Mr. Walbourne?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I didn't hear what Mr. Walbourne said, but the organization has to be independent, in my view. At this stage, I don't think a hybrid body would give people much confidence.

Conversely, establishing an independent body comes with all sorts of challenges, since members of the military serve on bases and move from place to place.

• (1245)

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Establishing an independent body does indeed have its challenges, but as you said, that independence matters.

Why do you think seven of your 10 recommendations have yet to be fully implemented by the Canadian Armed Forces? Your report came out years ago. Why is there still so much to do?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** I can't answer that.

Two years after my report came out, I criticized the Canadian Armed Forces for the same thing. Initially, I was told that all the recommendations had been implemented. After looking at the little table the Canadian Armed Forces had put together, I explained that the recommendations had not all been implemented. Regardless, I can't explain it.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** We are still looking for solutions. What additional measures should be taken to curtail, if not eliminate, sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces? You put forward recommendations, but seven have yet to be implemented. Perhaps the issue has been considered and discussed further since then. Do you think other measures should be implemented?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** As I indicated, someone else could be asked to take a fresh look at the problem or new blood could be brought in to examine the current situation. Having been outside the system for six years, I can't recommend anything concrete other than—

[*English*]

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

Now we will go to Ms. Mathysen for the final two and a half minutes.

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

I'm going to use my two and half minutes to hopefully have Madam Deschamps answer a question I have. It is around that authority, ensuring that the women placed in authority have the support they need.

I know there are education programs now, but are they sufficient and do you have recommendations around that?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** As I mentioned, I don't have any further recommendations, because I don't know what's going on right now. It's been six years now. I know, for example, that the advocate I just mentioned exists, but this function doesn't hold.... It's only a tiny portion of what I designed. If they can start with putting in place my recommendations, that would be a start.

There may be more to do. I don't know. I have not been there.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** I heard that often the education portion is extremely limited. While it may happen every year, it's extremely short. It's not maybe taken as seriously.

Did you see ways that could be enhanced—maybe not the direct education or the specific steps, but that focus on education?

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** The Canadian Armed Forces has been very good at tackling other issues. For example, they tackled...not completely, but they did a lot of work with alcohol consumption. It took a lot of effort.

If they can just gather their efforts to do the same kind of control that they are doing on alcohol consumption.... They were subsidizing it. They stopped doing that. It was an open bar very often. They stopped doing that. They put limits. They could think of measures. They did that.

In the matter of mental illness, they have more programs on this.

If they can just use the tools that they already have in place for other issues, that would be a good start.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** We just have to find the will to do that.

**The Chair:** I want to thank Madam Deschamps for her excellent testimony today.

Thank you so much for being with the committee.

**Ms. Marie Deschamps:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Now we have a bit of committee business to do.

Ms. Sidhu.

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

As we discussed, it's the will of multiple members to proceed with a brief discussion of committee business. Members have busy schedules in their constituencies. I'm worried about the clerks and the interpretation staff working on over 28 committees.

Madam Chair, for purpose and clarity, I have a motion that will be sent to all members in both official languages.

With regard to the motion, I move the following:

That, regarding the committee's study of sexual misconduct within the Canadian Armed Forces, each party be invited to submit their priority-ranked witnesses to the clerk by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, and these witnesses be invited by the clerk based on the schedule of the committee.

• (1250)

**The Chair:** As that's a dilatory motion, there is no debate on that motion.

Clerk, I would invite you to take the vote.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Madam Chair, as a point of order, there's no... I just want to clarify, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** My understanding is that, when there's a motion like that, it's a dilatory motion. It's not subject to any discussion. It just goes to an immediate vote.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** On a point of order, can we clarify with the clerk that it's a dilatory motion?

**The Chair:** Yes.

Clerk, if you have an opinion, now's a good time for it.

**The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Stephanie Bond):** In my opinion, it is not a dilatory motion.

**The Chair:** Okay. Well, I'm to the will of the committee, then. If there's discussion about the motion, I'll hear it.

Ms. Zahid.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** I agree with my colleague, Ms. Sidhu.

Next week, we have the constituency week, and I think it will not be appropriate to take time out of the constituency week.

I know it is an important study. We can have the list of the witnesses submitted by next week and then schedule those witnesses. The list of witnesses is intended to make sure that, if we don't have one witness, we can always go to the next one. If all the parties can submit their witness list next week, then we can schedule once we come back after the constituency week.

I think it will not be fair to us in terms of fulfilling our responsibilities as members of Parliament towards our constituents, and also for the interpreters and analysts who have been working so hard in adapting to new norms virtually. Let's be fair to everyone and have the meeting after the constituency weeks.

**The Chair:** Yes, and if we can settle this point today, then I will certainly be willing to cancel the scheduled Tuesday meeting.

Ms. Mathysen.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** These are more just points of clarification. One of the reasons for the motion was that we wanted to ensure that all witnesses were heard. This was because, previously, that was not the will of the committee, so we wanted to reinforce the will of the committee that specific witnesses were heard. I understand some witnesses aren't available at specific times, so supplementing that is all right. That was always available to every member of the committee.

However, I want to make sure we understand that those witnesses need to be in place as much as possible. I would also like to know and make sure that once we submit one list of witnesses.... From my point of view, I wanted to hear specifically from all of the witnesses on that list, see if there were holes—as we've determined in other studies, sometimes holes can happen—in the testimony and then be able to add to that.

I'm quite happy to bring forward witnesses by March 31, but will I have an opportunity to do that again if I feel that there are still things that need to be heard from others? We can do the research and work with the analysts, who are incredible, and the clerk, who is incredible, to ensure that we fill those holes, but I want to make sure that's not going to be limited for this as well.

**The Chair:** It's always the will of the committee to add additional meetings and additional witnesses to studies as they go through them. I would just clarify that on the list of witnesses specified in the motion, several of those cannot appear before April 13. They're not available and that was the issue that we had.

Ms. Alleslev.

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

I would like to then make an amendment to this motion. After “the clerk based on the schedule of the committee”—that's where it ends—add “with two meetings to be held during the week of April 6 to April 9, 2021”.

This motion as it stands says that we would have witnesses by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 31, which sounds perfect, and that these witnesses be invited by the clerk based on the schedule of the committee, which is perfect, and then my amendment is to include two meetings during the second break week of April 5 to April 9.

● (1255)

**The Chair:** I will hear discussion then on the amendment.

Ms. Zahid.

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

The discussion was not to have the meetings in the break week. That's what we were discussing, and based on the amendment that has been proposed, Ms. Alleslev is looking for two meetings during the break week. This is exactly the point we were discussing before, as well as submitting the lists of the witnesses. It's to make sure that appropriate time is provided to the MPs to fulfill their duties as members of Parliament and be responsible to their constituents.

I think we should meet and have meetings during the weeks when the House is sitting, and that would be the week of April 12.

**The Chair:** Ms. Hutchings.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd just like to echo what my colleague Ms. Zahid said. This additional week is a constituency week. It's a shorter week because it's the Easter weekend.

Also, I just want to reiterate that, for the analysts, it's an Easter break with them as well. Also, we've heard often, in every committee and we hear it in the House, about the stress that all the interpretation is putting on the interpreters. I think we need to consider all that as well, and I think we need to let the clerk have time to get the witnesses in place for that following week.

**The Chair:** Ms. Alleslev.

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

This is a very important topic, and yes, we absolutely have responsibilities to our constituents, but as members of Parliament we have responsibilities to the men and women in uniform to do our very best as quickly as possible at a moment in time where, as the acting chief of the defence staff says, the military is in a crisis and this is an inflection point and Canadians, as well as men and women in uniform, are looking to us to do the work for the country as much as the work for our constituents.

This amendment is a compromise. We have one break week exclusively for our constituents and another break week where we take two opportunities to have meetings to speak about and investigate such an important topic further. I know that our colleagues, from the other angle of this study, on the defence committee, are meeting both break weeks.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Ms. Dhillon.

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

There's no difference between next week and the week after. It's a constituency week. We also have obligations towards our constituents. We have obligations towards our staff to not overwork them. We have only three weeks until Parliament goes for a full run for the next seven weeks.

It's not okay to stress out our staffers and overwork them. Just because we have Zoom, it doesn't mean we can or should abuse it and end up abusing our staffers, the interpreters and the clerks. I think everybody is in need of a break. Everybody needs to be able to just take these moments for themselves.

Yes, we have duties towards our Canadian Armed Forces, but we have duties towards our constituents. We have duties towards the mental health of other people who surround us and who support us all the time.

I think we have to really take into consideration the mental health of those who are supporting us. It starts to become about that because we already had constituency week meetings and pre-meetings. Just because Zoom exists doesn't mean we should abuse it.

• (1300)

**The Chair:** Ms. Zahid.

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

I agree with Ms. Dhillon. We have two constituency weeks. After that we are here for five weeks. Over 100,000 people in my riding are trying to get through COVID-19 in this difficult time. I have a lot of scheduled meetings with stakeholders and businesses. With the lockdowns and all, businesses are facing a lot of issues, so I think it is very important that we complete that work in the next two weeks. I know it is an important study and we'll come back to this on April 12.

In these difficult times, as we are all trying to navigate through COVID-19, the numbers are increasing. In Ontario, we have seen a sharp increase. I think there are a lot of reasons for us to make sure we are there for our constituents also. I think it will not be fair to the legislative staff here, like the clerks and the interpreters, who are trying to run the committees during the Easter week.

**The Chair:** We will vote on the amendment, which is to have two meetings the week of April 6.

(Amendment negatived: nays 5; yeas 4)

**The Chair:** We will vote on the motion.

Madam Larouche, did you have a point?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Yes, pardon me, Madam Chair. I was speaking to people at my party whip's office to figure out how much extra work it would be for the clerk and House staff if we met twice during the second break week.

The committee seemed to be split on the amendment we just voted on, in other words, holding two meetings during the second break week. Some members don't want to hold any meetings in the next two weeks, and others want two meetings, but the Liberals seem to think that would be too much. How about meeting just once, then—Thursday of the second break week, April 8? That would be a good compromise.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** I think it's out of order because we are voting on the motion.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Can't I put forward a new motion to hold a single meeting, on Thursday, April 8?

[*English*]

**The Chair:** No, not until we finish voting on this motion.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Can Madam Larouche not propose another amendment to the motion?

**The Chair:** No, because we had started the voting.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Okay. I'm sorry.

**The Chair:** The clerk will take the vote on the motion.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

• (1305)

**The Chair:** We will call for the witnesses by Wednesday and let the clerk put them in order.

Madam Larouche.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** I understand the Liberals' point: we should provide a list of witnesses by March 31 in addition to giving ourselves time for constituency work. I am amenable to that. Holding two meetings may have taken up too much of our time.

As a compromise, this is what I would suggest. We have until March 31 to submit our witness lists. That gives committee staff time to collect the names. We could then meet on Thursday, April 8, to get a bit of a jump, given how much we have on our plate.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** There is a new motion on the table. Is there discussion on that motion?

Seeing none, I will have the clerk take the vote.

We have a tie, and I vote yes.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5 [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** We will have one meeting the week of April 6. I leave it to the clerk to organize whatever is best. Please have your witness lists in by next Wednesday.

Thank you to everyone for staying a few minutes. I will cancel the committee business meeting that was originally for next Tuesday.

Is it the will of the committee to adjourn?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Have a wonderful break week and a half. I will see you then.

The meeting is adjourned.





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