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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 want to welcome everyone to meeting 22 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I call the meeting to order. Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the House order of January 25, 2021. The rules are as usual.

I remind members that they should address their comments through the chair. The interpretation will work very much like in all of our committee meetings. When you're speaking, please speak slowly and clearly, and when you're not speaking, your mike should be on mute.

I want to welcome our witnesses today.

Welcome to the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Harjit Sajjan, who is here along with Jody Thomas, the deputy minister, and Lieutenant-General Wayne Eyre, the acting chief of the defence staff. We also have with us Rear-Admiral Geneviève Bernatchez, the judge advocate general for the Canadian Armed Forces, and Dr. Denise Preston, the executive director for the sexual misconduct response centre.

Each of you will have time to make your opening remarks. I assume that it will be the minister first, for five minutes.

Then we'll begin our rounds of questions.

Go ahead, Minister.

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Sexual misconduct remains a serious issue in our military, and the recent allegations against senior military leaders are incredibly concerning. There are points that I hope all members of this committee agree upon. Sexual misconduct, sexual violence, assault and harassment are unacceptable. They are unacceptable in Canadian society. They are not acceptable in the Parliament of Canada. They are definitely not acceptable in the Canadian Armed Forces or the Department of National Defence.

I look forward to the recommendations of this committee to see what more we can do. I believe it is important for the committee to hear from experts such as Rear-Admiral Rebecca Patterson, Dr. Denise Preston, Professor Maya Eichler and Brigadier-General

Atherton, all of whom would be able to provide their own expertise to help the committee develop strong, concrete recommendations.

Sexual misconduct, harassment and inappropriate behaviour are not acceptable. We must call them out for what they are: an abuse of power. Such behaviour is contrary to our values as Canadians and harmful to the Canadian Forces operational effectiveness. We want to prevent it. We want to be there for survivors and their support networks. We want to ensure that those who come forward feel safe, supported and confident that they will be heard when they report sexual misconduct and harassment.

Eliminating all forms of misconduct and abuse of power and creating a safe work environment for everyone in the defence team has always been a top priority for me as Minister of National Defence. However, recent media reports show that many members of the Canadian Armed Forces still do not feel safe to come forward. We know we must do more to make sure that every Canadian Armed Forces member feels safe to come forward and that we will be ready to support them when they do.

We are committed to addressing all allegations, no matter the rank and no matter the position, while also providing the best support possible to those who have been affected. That's why we must continue pressing forward with our mission to eliminate all forms of sexual misconduct in all ranks. It's why we're moving forward with an independent reporting structure to look at all allegations, as I noted earlier this month. We have put in place a wide range of services to support those who have been impacted, as well as a number of ways they can report incidents.

I'd like to tell you about some of the resources that are available now.

For both military and civilian members, we have services like the employee assistance program and the member assistance program, which provide 24/7 access to professional, short-term counselling for affected defence team members and their families. Additionally, the sexual misconduct response centre is a key resource for those in our organizations who are affected by sexual misconduct. It is independent from the military chain of command and reports directly to the deputy minister of national defence. Although its primary mandate is to serve Canadian Armed Forces members, the SMRC offers 24/7 confidential support and counselling services to anyone who reaches out.

Dr. Preston and her team help members navigate the various support services available to them, both inside and outside the department. They can help members access the right mechanisms to report incidents of sexual misconduct, including the military liaison team, which is made up of a military police liaison officer, a special military advisor and a military liaison officer.

Those who work at SMRC are dedicated to their work. They are experts in their field and can give members advice about how to make a complaint or about what is involved in an investigative process. They can facilitate reporting if the member chooses to do so. The SMRC can also assign a dedicated counsellor to support members through the process, including advocating for them, accompanying them to appointments and assisting them with workplace accommodations.

They are also working with affected members to develop new programs and create a national survivor support strategy. The SMRC offers crucial expert guidance and recommendations that shape the policies and programs that target sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. It advises us on how to evaluate and report on their effectiveness.

Beyond the SMRC, members can also reach out to chaplain services, military family resource centres, the employee assistance program, the family information line or anyone across the chain of command to get the help they need.

● (1105)

These resources are critical to supporting those affected by sexual misconduct, but they are just part of our larger efforts to build a safe and inclusive workplace for all members of our defence team. We're working to eliminate the toxic masculinity that forms part of our military culture and keeps us from moving forward, the outdated and toxic traditions that valorize toughness and aggression over emotional intelligence and co-operation, and any part of our culture that contributes to bullying, harassment and other inappropriate behaviours.

Identifying and eliminating these harmful cultural dynamics is a key feature of the path to dignity and respect, our culture change strategy designed to prevent and address sexual misconduct in the military. Sexual misconduct must never be minimized, ignored or excused. We must prevent it from happening in the first place. We must reduce the risks and threats to people, their health and their well-being. This is one important step in making our institution more progressive, welcoming and inclusive.

At the same time, we remain committed to increasing the number of women that we recruit, retain and promote in our ranks. Women belong at every level of our organization. I'm proud of the leadership we are seeing in both our institution and our operations. We know that having a diversity of voices at the table makes us more agile and effective.

We know we have to keep pushing forward. We still have a lot of work to do. We cannot rest, because as Canadian society evolves, the Canadian Armed Forces must evolve with it. We need to prevent any form of misconduct from occurring. This can only happen with true culture change. That means having more diversity in leadership roles. In 2015 the Canadian Armed Forces had six women

general or flag officers. Now we have 14, and soon we will have the first woman vice-chief of the defence staff. Creating a pipeline for women leaders has been one of my top priorities, because this will make the change permanent, outlasting any government and outlasting any minister.

Madam Chair, real, concrete and important steps are being taken to eliminate sexual misconduct from all corners of our organization, but our efforts will not stop here. We must and we will do more. Trust has been broken, and it's going to take some serious work to rebuild it. We are focused on doing everything possible to prevent and eliminate sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. We will eliminate the culture of toxic masculinity that still exists. We will make sure those who have experienced misconduct feel safe and supported when they come forward. We will build a more inclusive, welcoming Canadian Armed Forces that better reflect and represent the Canadians they protect each and every day.

We know we must take bold action to provide everyone on the defence team with a safe and respectful work environment, one where dignity and respect for all is embraced by each person, and one that retains the positive aspects of the Canadian Armed Forces culture that we see today—a flexible, dedicated, professional force that is ready to help at a moment's notice, at home and abroad.

Madam Chair, thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thanks so much, Minister.

We will begin our rounds of questioning. To help you out, when there are 30 seconds left, you will see the card. I will try to be kind and gentle as I cut you off.

We'll start with Ms. Alleslev for six minutes.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.):** On a point of order, Madam Chair, the staff cannot hear on the phone line. Can someone look into that? Thank you.

**The Chair:** Could the technician take a look at that? Thank you.

Go ahead, Ms. Alleslev.

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

Thank you, Minister, for appearing before this committee.

There's no question that we all agree that any form of inappropriate behaviour, abuse of authority or misconduct cannot be tolerated in the Canadian Forces. We also have an expectation of our elected officials that they will ensure that it is a workplace free of harassment, and that those who may have committed offences are investigated and held accountable.

As the elected minister responsible for national defence, are you responsible for holding all those who have committed infractions accountable?

• (1110)

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, it is important for all elected officials, including me, to make sure we create an environment free of harassment and free of sexual harassment, and to make sure everybody can succeed.

This is why, as elected officials, we want to make sure we have put policies in place and made the appropriate changes to make sure we can hold people accountable.

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

Were you aware of the concerns in the vetting process in the previous government when Vance was appointed CDS?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, I want to make sure I got the question right. Is this about General Vance's vetting process when he became chief of the defence staff?

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** When you became Minister of National Defence, were you made aware of the previous government's vetting process and any concerns that arose from that regarding General Vance?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** No, I was not, Madam Chair.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Can you confirm, Minister, as the elected official responsible for National Defence, that currently no senior officers are, or have, acted in an abuse of authority or any sexual misconduct and not been held accountable for those offences?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, any type of misconduct needs to be reported to the independent agencies, including the police. I am not briefed on ongoing investigations. One thing I can assure you, Madam Chair, is that we will always hold people to account in making sure the proper processes are put in place to ensure the data is thoroughly investigated.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Is every complaint investigated and every infraction that you're made aware of investigated, Mr. Minister?

Is that your testimony?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, every person has the right to be heard to make sure that any allegations are brought forward to appropriate independent agencies so they can be independently investigated by the appropriate authority.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Were you made aware of the concerns regarding Admiral Norman?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, when it came to Admiral Norman I was advised only at a later date that the RCMP investigation had started.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Were you made aware of the results of the RCMP investigation into Admiral Norman?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, I am not briefed on investigations—

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Were you made aware of the results of the investigation, when Admiral Norman was charged?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, just like the public, I learn of the outcome and any type of result only when it goes through an appropriate court proceeding.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** When the chief of the defence staff made the decision to suspend Admiral Norman, were you advised?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Yes, I was.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Why did you not suspend General Vance when you were made aware of allegations?

• (1115)

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, as I stated, first of all, in the case of Admiral Norman, I was advised by the chief of the defence staff at that time that an investigation had been started and a decision had been made.

In this case, when formal allegations were brought forward by the former ombudsman, I immediately took it to the appropriate independent authorities so it could be investigated. Information was not provided at that time—

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Did you direct that an investigation be conducted?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, it's also extremely important to note that it was taken independently. More importantly, as the member is questioning a 2015 investigation, as the former chief of staff to Prime Minister Harper clearly stated—

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

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

We're now moving along to Ms. Dhillon for six minutes.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.):** Good morning, Minister. Thank you for attending committee.

In 2019 our committee presented the following report to the House of Commons: "A Force for Change: Creating a Culture of Equality for Women in the Canadian Armed Forces".

Within the report were a number of recommendations provided to the government on the path forward in addressing the sexual [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] culture, and measures that could be implemented to help eliminate discrimination, violence and harassment, including sexual harassment in the CAF.

Recommendations two and three were specifically about mandatory comprehensive sexual harassment and awareness training.

I have three questions, and I'll break them down.

What is the current training offered to members of the Canadian Armed Forces? Is it consistent across sectors and chains of command? Are you looking to review any current gaps or needed changes to make it more effective?

Thank you.

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** First of all, Madam Chair, right off the bat, it is extremely important that we take the recommendations from the experts, so I appreciate the information that was provided.

Yes, training is currently provided, because ultimately we're trying to create a culture through which we can eliminate any type of misconduct that occurs. That's extremely important.

When it comes to the details of the training, I'd like to hand it over to either General Eyre or the deputy minister to answer more specifically regarding exactly what type of training is provided now.

**Lieutenant-General Wayne D. Eyre (Acting Chief of the Defence Staff, Department of National Defence):** Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chair, sexual misconduct training is conducted annually for all members of the Canadian Armed Forces, but in my view annually is not enough, and there has to be a constant drumbeat to remind our members of what right looks like.

In terms of gaps in that training, as I rapidly find my feet in this job, some of the gaps are becoming apparent, such as those to do with power dynamics and understanding the use and abuse of power in a hierarchy like our own.

On some of the other training that's out there, bystander training is part of it, as is training on respect in the CAF, but I can give you a much more detailed list if I take this question on notice.

Thank you.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** Thank you very much for that.

I would like to ask a follow-up question on the report. This report also emphasized how essential it is for members who experience sexual misconduct to have access to victim- and survivor-centred supports and services. We know that the sexual misconduct response centre offers members of the Canadian Armed Forces many crucial services.

Can you please discuss any expansion of services in the SMRC since 2019 and any future plans to further expand its role and mandate to help victims and survivors?

Thank you.

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, before I hand the question off to Dr. Preston, who is the real expert when it comes to the work we do—in particular, she is the person who leads SMRC—I will say that it is very important that we provide the appropriate support. We can only imagine what somebody actually goes through when dealing with something so traumatic, so they need to be able to come forward and be guided toward the appropriate resources that exist. It is so important to make sure they get the appropriate resources. Not only have we supported the SMRC, but we are look-

ing at future plans for expansion to make sure they get the appropriate support, reaching all parts of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Dr. Preston, can you take that question, please?

• (1120)

**Dr. Denise Preston (Executive Director, Sexual Misconduct Response Centre, Department of National Defence):** Just to make sure, because I missed part of what you said, was the question about what services have been put in place since 2019 to better support members?

The first thing is that in August 2019, we added the response and support coordination program, which is the program the minister spoke about in his opening remarks. It is about providing a single point of contact for members and supporting members from the time of first disclosure until such time as they feel they no longer need that type of support.

We have quite a number of members involved in that program right now. At present, we are offering that from a centralized location, but we are currently looking at expanding it to have regional sites across the country. That would be much more responsive to members' needs.

Another service that we also got into place in 2019 was a contribution program whereby we are providing funds to nine different sexual assault centres across the country to support them and the services they provide to the broader CAF community. This is in recognition of the fact that while there are many members who would prefer to have services within the military and who are familiar with military contexts and issues, there are also members who would prefer to go completely outside [*Technical difficulty—Editor*].

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

We're now going to Madame Larouche.

[*Translation*]

You have the floor for six minutes.

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

We're all very concerned about the issue of sexual misconduct. It should be noted that sexual misconduct is unacceptable behaviour in the military and throughout society.

I want to go back a bit. A while ago, journalist Noémi Mercier wrote an article on the topic. An investigation revealed the following:

The culture is hostile to women and LGBTQ [members] and conducive to serious incidents of sexual harassment and assault. Cultural change is therefore key. It is not enough to simply revise policies or to repeat the mantra of “zero tolerance”. Leaders must acknowledge that sexual misconduct is a real and serious problem for the [Canadian Armed Forces] ...

This came out in former Justice Deschamps' report in 2015.

This prompted the Standing Committee on the Status of Women to address the issue in 2019.

Minister Sajjan, when you took office, weren't there any indications that you needed to pay attention to this toxic culture in the military?

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, this was one of my top priorities as a minister when I took office in 2015. In fact, from the early reporting, Madame Deschamps' report that came out in 2015 was extremely important to us for the work that we started: the work that the SMRC does, the passing of Bill C-77, the declaration of victims rights, making policy—

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Minister Sajjan—

**The Chair:** Ms. Larouche, can you raise your microphone?

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Are you speaking to me, Madam Chair?

The sound is cutting out a lot.

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** I'm sorry. Is my sound cutting out, Madam Chair, or...?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** I have a point of order. The minister's sound is very bad.

[English]

**The Chair:** Can the clerk see if they can fix that in the room?

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** That would be good because I don't want to lose my speaking time, Madam Chair.

[English]

**The Chair:** I will stop the clock while we resolve.

Is it better? Yes?

All right. You can continue. I'll add your time.

• (1125)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** You said that you read the 2015 Deschamps report and that you tabled Bill C-77 to address the issue.

Also, in your opening remarks, you said that sexual misconduct must never be ignored. So you have never ignored information about any allegations. Is that right?

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Absolutely.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** So you didn't ignore the information in the hands of the ombudsman, Gary Walbourne.

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, as I've stated very clearly before—and I'll say it again unequivocally—I take any allegation, regardless of rank or position, very seriously.

Immediately after that meeting, I took it to the appropriate authorities. I think we can all agree that no politician should ever be part of an investigation. By taking it immediately to the appropriate authorities, the independent ombudsman was able to provide information to an independent agency in the Privy Council Office, which is responsible for Governor in Council appointments, so that it could be taken to exactly where it needed to go and so that action could be taken. That was done immediately.

I can assure you that it's something I take very seriously. As I told the ombudsman at the time, the rank or position of the person does not matter. It has to be independently investigated. Why the former ombudsman did not provide that [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] is for him to [*Technical difficulty—Editor*], but what we can do is make sure that the information is provided independently. It is extremely critical to say—and I state this unequivocally—that no politician should ever be involved in an investigation.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Minister Sajjan, you said that you sent the information to the Privy Council Office so that the investigation could be conducted independently. However, you know that the PCO didn't do anything. Does this mean that you were letting the matter drop? If so, why did you want to let it drop? Did you want to hide some information?

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, that's absolutely not true at all. As an elected official, I have to provide it to the appropriate authorities to actually take action. I have to be able to trust in that process. We cannot allow politicians to get involved in any type of investigation. This is something I take very seriously. It has to go through a proper process because ultimately this is one of the fundamental things we need to—

[Translation]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche:** Okay.

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, if we don't follow the appropriate process—

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** I gather from your comments—

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** —to get just outcomes for a person who comes forward, we may not get the just outcome.

**The Chair:** Minister, I think she has one more question.

Go ahead, Madame Larouche.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Madam Chair, I want to remind you that the sound cut out several times while the minister was responding. I don't know what happened, but I was cheated out of some of my time. That's very unfortunate.

[English]

**The Chair:** You still have half a minute.

[Translation]

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

Minister Sajjan, you said that, if the Department of National Defence had gotten involved, it would have constituted interference. Are you telling me that the Privy Council Office is an independent and non-political investigative body?

I'm waiting for your response.

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, as I stated, the Privy Council Office is responsible for Governor in Council appointments, and the chief of the defence staff is one of those. Having the former ombudsman go to the appropriate authorities so it could be determined where the information needed to go was extremely important. If we don't follow a proper process, one of the most important things is that we may not get a just outcome. The last thing we want to do—

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

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

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for appearing today.

Last week, Lieutenant-Colonel Eleanor Taylor, a highly respected officer, resigned from the forces. She pointed to a seething undercurrent of rage among the women serving. She's one example. This is happening to so many women.

Minister, as the defence minister do you feel any responsibility for the conditions that created this undercurrent, whereby women have no option but to give up their years of service and the commitment they've made to their country? They have no option but to give that all up, resign and go to the media to report these undercurrents.

• (1130)

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, it is extremely disturbing to hear this. These members of the Canadian Armed Forces want to serve their country and have the flag on their left shoulder to represent their country, and for them to feel they have to leave is extremely disturbing.

I've made it a personal mission, from the time I was serving to now, to make sure that anybody who wants to join can reach their true potential. To know that people feel like this.... More importantly, there are women and other people who have left the Canadian Armed Forces even beforehand, and that's extremely disturbing. It's not—

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** You've made it your personal mission, Minister, yet when the ombudsperson came to you and tried to bring something forward, you refused to hear him. You've repeatedly stated that no political officer had a place in these investigations, so you refused to hear it. You say that you reported it to the appropriate authorities, but upon not receiving the information they demanded—which I would argue is inappropriate, because they could have done it without names and they could have continued to do an investigation—they also dropped it; they left out that responsibility. At whatever point, whose responsibility is it? I'm asking, after you had sent it to the PCO, did you follow up with them, this so-called appropriate authority?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, when it comes to any type of allegation, it has to be handled appropriately. This is one of the reasons I took it extremely seriously and immediately said, sorry, there is no confidentiality when you're talking about a chief of the defence staff; it has to be reported to the appropriate authorities. In this case here, that's the agency that's responsible for Governor in Council appointments, and it was immediately followed up.

If we don't follow that process.... Just imagine this, for anyone who's done an investigation, if you end up interfering politically in an investigation when somebody has the confidence to come forward, you can undermine that entire investigation if there was any interference. I wanted to make sure that the information was dealt with properly, so that if it turned into a proper investigation and had to go to court, there would be no reason for somebody to say somebody interfered and the person couldn't get a just outcome. That's how seriously I take it.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Minister, you've consistently said—

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** I understand the point that somebody is trying to make here.

I want to make it very clear, Madam Chair, I can assure you, that any time somebody brings any type of information, it is always—

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** But there's a difference between authority and responsibility.



**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** You can paint this any way you want, but I can assure you that it's something I take extremely seriously. It was something I took seriously at that time, and I took it to the appropriate authorities immediately.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** There was no follow-up, Minister. Nothing happened. There was no follow-up.

Another thing is you sent this to the PCO. You actually just said in your five-minute statement that the SMRC is an independent body that reports to the deputy minister and has been in place since 2015. Why would it not have gone to the SMRC if it is truly independent from those political problems that you've mentioned? Wouldn't it have been the proper resource to go to as well? Couldn't you have followed up with the SMRC?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, when it came to sending it to the appropriate authorities, it was done. The ombudsman could have actually gone to the SMRC, and the ombudsman could have gone to the military police as well. Right now, we can continue to talk about this, and I can assure you that I followed all the appropriate processes. What I'm also going to stay focused on, and I look forward to hearing all your advice on, is how we make those appropriate changes.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** Minister, do you blame the ombudsman for not doing his job properly. Is that what you're saying?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, the question that you asked me was whether I followed the appropriate process. Absolutely, I did. It's not for me to speak for the ombudsman, you will have to ask your own questions regarding that. I have my own questions as well.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** Did you advise the ombudsman to go to the SMRC?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** One thing I have to do is.... It's my responsibility to provide the information to the appropriate authorities, and that's exactly what was done.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** Minister, could you have advised the ombudsman, in your role as his only boss, to go to the SMRC?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** I did advise the ombudsman to do that, Madam Chair. In fact, the ombudsman didn't ask me for advice, but I gave it, and the advice was it had to be told to the appropriate authorities.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** Did you follow up on that, as he's responsible to you?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Yes, I absolutely followed up, Madam Chair. I followed up immediately with the Privy Council Office, and the very next day, the Privy Council contacted him for the information. The advice was given. Did you go to the military police? Did you provide the information to the appropriate authorities? More importantly, it was followed up the very next day so that action could be taken.

• (1135)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** This occurred in 2018, and at what point did you just wipe your hands of it? You said you had followed up; you said—

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

We'll have to go to Ms. Sahota now in the second round, for five minutes.

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

Thank you, Minister, for being here.

Ray Novak, the chief of staff to Prime Minister Harper, testified that not only was it not political interference to ensure serious allegations were investigated and the results were reported back, but it was the responsibility of elected officials to do so. As Minister of National Defence, you are legally accountable for the direction and management of the Canadian Forces, including the chief of the defence staff, who reports directly to you. Why did you think it was not your responsibility to determine if General Vance was the best person to continue to lead Canada's military?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, I'll actually pull out the quote from the former chief of staff to Prime Minister Harper. He stated, "The Prime Minister's Office is not an investigative body. Senior officials in the Privy Council Office are the ones responsible for interacting with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces with respect to this matter."

That's exactly what I did. I forwarded the information to the Privy Council Office.

He also stated that "political staff and ministers clearly aren't investigative entities in our system of government". That's his quote, and then—

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** According to Ray Novak, the proper authorities were the NSA or the CFNIS. Did you ensure that an investigation was carried out by the NSA, the CFNIS or the RCMP?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, I think the member is changing the words of what the former chief of staff stated. It says here that the senior officials in the Privy Council are the ones responsible for interacting with the Department of National Defence, so they make the decision as to where that information needs to go.

When the information is given to the appropriate authorities, they can then decide where it needs to go, whether it's the military police or the NSA. It is up to them to decide. In this way, it can be kept out of political—

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Minister, you're avoiding answering my questions.

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Actually, I'm not. In fact, since we want to answer this question, why don't we also look at...? I've been asked the question: If their investigation had started, what action could have been taken? Clearly there was an investigation started in 2015, during the time that the previous chief of the defence staff was selected, so then why was a decision made at that time?

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** I have another question, Minister. As the elected official responsible for ensuring that men and women can serve honourably and without fear in the military, can you guarantee that not one of them suffered in any way because General Vance remained in his position for three years after serious allegations were brought to you?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, we will do everything in our power to make sure that everyone in the Canadian Armed Forces has a safe work environment. This is something we're absolutely committed to, and we have a zero-tolerance policy, regardless of rank or position. Any [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] will always be investigated by the appropriate independent authorities. This is something that we are committed to and that we will always take very seriously.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Can the military be a professional and safe environment for all if senior officials and officers who have committed sexual assault, misconduct, harassment or other offences are not held accountable and are able to continue in their position of authority?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, we have to continue to work to make sure we allow everybody in the Canadian Armed Forces to have a safe, inclusive environment to work in, so that they can reach their true potential. This is something we're not going to stop. This is something we were committed to in 2015. We're continually putting in the work, whether it's Bill C-77, the declaration of victims rights, the changes we made in policy or the support we're providing for SMRC.

We also know we have a lot more work to do, and I look forward to the recommendations you provide, because it is all our responsibility to make sure the Canadian Armed Forces have that safe environment.

• (1140)

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Minister, on what date did PCO inform you or your staff that they were unable to investigate the Vance allegations?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, as I stated, we provided the information to the appropriate authorities so that it could be independently investigated. Obviously, with the current situation, we wish that things were different, but one thing I can assure you of is that we have to always follow the appropriate processes; if we don't, it undermines a just outcome when finally somebody comes forward. That's the sentiment we always need to be mindful of.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we're going to Ms. Hutchings for five minutes.

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, Lib.):** Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome to you, Minister, and a special welcome to your defence team here with you today.

Minister, we all agree that this is a terrible problem. I would like to talk about going forward. What does cultural change in the Canadian Armed Forces actually look like to you?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, this is one of the most important questions that we all need to answer.

To me, true culture change is, first of all, when every member—all Canadians, regardless of gender, skin colour or sexual orientation—can join the Canadian Armed Forces, proudly serve their country and, more importantly, reach their true potential and not be hindered in any way. Ultimately, this is not about the person who has joined. This is about the institution itself. Whatever gifts the individual brings, the Canadian Armed Forces will be far more operationally effective for it.

To achieve this, that's what we need to do. How we get there is something we have been aggressively working towards. The education that needs to be done is down at the lowest levels. When somebody joins, it is about making sure that, from the time of basic training to the unit they go to, they have that inclusive environment, and when there is something that happens, they have a place to go, to be able to be heard without retribution. That's what we continually need to work towards, but we know we have a lot more work to do on it.

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

Could you sum up quickly some short-term and long-term goals when it comes to the complete and total culture change in the Canadian Armed Forces for men and women and all gender-inclusive people?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** The short-term goal is absolutely essential. We need to make sure that anybody who has any type of allegation is going to be heard and is going to be supported. It's going to be thoroughly investigated and dealt with quickly. Those are the things we're working on now. We were already looking at changes to independence from the chain of command and what that function would look like. Now we're going to be putting a lot more effort into that to make sure there's true independence.

The long-term goal is prevention. The long-term goal has to always be how we prevent these things from happening in the first place. Ultimately, that way, we don't need to be reactionary.

Culture change at the lowest level is going to be very important as we start recruiting more. Having more representation, having the policies in place, having independence when something does occur and having the complaint properly dealt with are all those things we need to take a look at.

Right now everything is on the table. We have a military justice review that's currently ongoing as well.

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

Minister, I've heard you speak the last few weeks as this issue has come to the forefront. You have said repeatedly that all options are on the table when addressing the current situation that DND and CAF are facing. What exactly does that mean? For Canadians listening today, what exactly do you mean when you say that all options are on the table?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** First of all, when I give directions to the Canadian Armed Forces when it comes to all options being on the table, we need to look at policies. For example, we need to look at the independent panel on systemic racism, gender bias and LGBTQ rights. They're going to be looking at the systemic issues. What are the changes we need to make? What policy changes do we need to make? Where are the resources we need, up to and including legislative changes? This is where the military justice review by Justice Fish is going to be extremely important.

Ultimately, we need to find out exactly where those issues are, but more importantly, no single report is going to fix this. What we need to create is an evergreen process so that, as things change, we can continually change with them. One solution we provide may fix a problem one time, but we also know that society evolves. We need to have flexibility in our policies so we can continually change and make sure resources are always put there. If we do this, we can eventually create that culture change.

I'm hopeful that we will, because the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Armed Forces will be impacted, as you know.

• (1145)

**Ms. Gudie Hutchings:** I have a quick question for either Ms. Thomas or Dr. Preston.

For people who are experiencing sexual misconduct, what process does a member have to come forward? If a member doesn't feel comfortable, is there another way they can get their concerns addressed?

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, you're out of time for the answer, so we're going to go to Madame Larouche.

[Translation]

You have two and a half minutes.

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Minister Sajjan, you're saying today that the appropriate process was to contact the Privy Council Office. On March 12, you said that it was to contact the military police. In February, you said that you couldn't talk about the appropriate process. There's some inconsistency here.

So I'll turn to you, Mr. Eyre. If one of your peers were to face allegations, who do you think should lead the investigation? Can the minister take action against officers of your rank?

[English]

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, from my perspective, the Canadian Forces national investigation service has the mandate to investigate all allegations of a criminal nature.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Is this the case, regardless of the rank of the person against whom the allegations are made?

[English]

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, it's regardless of rank.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Minister Sajjan, you said that politicians shouldn't conduct investigations. We're in agreement. Right now, it's necessary to take action to change the culture in the military. The Privy Council Office is indeed a very political entity. So who can take action?

I'd like to hear your thoughts on this, Minister Sajjan.

[English]

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, this is actually a very important question.

When somebody has any type of concern, complaint or serious allegation, up to and including sexual assault, there should be one place they go to get the appropriate support. That way they're not looking at who to call and where it is they need to go. It's a one-door process from where they can be guided with the appropriate support and ask for an investigation, whether it's a chain of command issue....

This is something we're working on now. We already have the processes currently in place. Obviously, we need to make some serious changes to those processes. What we need to do moving forward is to have one place somebody comes to. This is something we're working on now.

**The Chair:** Very good.

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

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Minister, you said that the PCO couldn't move forward in the investigation that the ombudsperson brought to you because, under General Vance, everybody knew about it and the names were important.

Do you believe that survivors who fear reprisals from their superiors should be forced to disclose their names in order for any allegation to be investigated?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, first of all, I can't say what PCO did or didn't do.

However, when it comes to the investigation, the ombudsman also knows that the investigation can be launched without identifying somebody. CFNIS and police agencies do this all the time.

In this case here, in the ombudsman's directive, it clearly states that. You can actually go forward and make a complaint. It can be started.

The judge advocate general can maybe answer to provide more clarity to that.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Sorry, I just want to slip in. Before, you said that the PCO couldn't move forward with the investigation because they didn't have the name and they didn't have the details. Now you're saying that you didn't know what the PCO had or how they could or couldn't move forward.

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** No. What I said.... Based on the ombudsman's own testimony, Madam Chair, the ombudsman did not provide the information, and, by his own words, he said the information was not actionable.

Ultimately, it's not up to us as elected politicians to decide where and what should happen. It is an independent agency to look at a proper process that needs to take place.

• (1150)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** I'm hearing that there's, sadly, this key difference between given authority versus the responsibility and taking responsibility.

I see that you, as Minister of Defence, have a responsibility. You said yourself that you have responsibility to fix these systems.

Going forward, if there's still an ombudsman and if this happens again, would you continue to ignore an allegation? Would you follow the same process, or would you make changes to what you did in the past?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, no politician should ever be involved in an investigation.

In the ombudsman's directives themselves, the ombudsman can go to—and it clearly states this—the judge advocate general, the CFNIS, or the military police. They can also go to the provost marshal. The former ombudsman did not take those options and came directly to me. In the directives, it doesn't state “go to the Minister of National Defence”.

When we say that when it comes to any allegations, the ombudsman is independent of the chain of command, that's exactly what it means.

When he came to me, I gave the direct advice to go to those agencies. More importantly, we followed up with the independent agency, with the Privy Council, immediately, and they followed up the next day. The ombudsman did not provide the information.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister.

Now we're going to Ms. Shin for five minutes.

**Ms. Nelly Shin (Port Moody—Coquitlam, CPC):** Thank you, Minister, for appearing before us in committee today.

This is obviously a topic that we are very interested in seeing a resolution to, but I feel it is very important that there is more clarity in terms of responsibility here.

In your testimony at defence committee, you said that all men and women in uniform deserve a CDS who behaves to the highest standard of conduct.

Is that correct?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Yes.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Okay, so we're on the same page with that.

You also stated that you are the direct boss of the CDS.

Is that correct?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Yes.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Does the CDS serve at the pleasure of the Governor General, or is it your responsibility?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** I do not make the selection. I could provide some more clarity on that, if you like.

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** I'm trying to get clarity on what you're trying to say about your responsibility. My concern is that we're trying to bring about a cultural shift. You keep bringing that up. You also bring up a lot about process, how you depend on a process. You don't want to bring clarity to that responsibility. You're just talking about process.

A shift in culture comes when we can transcend the process, when we recognize a responsibility. It was three years before General Vance was suspended. To me, that speaks volumes about abdication of responsibility.

Through this process, do you feel that you could have perceived this a little differently? Your answers consistently show that you're not owning up to the reality that you're not taking action to create a shift in the culture. The longer you continue to create confusion around responsibility—the longer you continue to dodge responsibility this way or that—it's not going to change. If it doesn't come from the top, if you can't just take the higher road, it's not going to happen.

If you keep repeating the same points—I'm just sensing you're still not owning up to this—how do you expect the culture to shift? Are you not making it more difficult for yourself to actually take action? You're continually defending the fact that you didn't take action. The reality is it was three years before General Vance was suspended.

I would like to hear from you as a genuine person who actually cares about women and this toxic masculinity culture and who wants that to shift. I would like to hear you speak from your heart about how you could proceed differently from this point forward. I want you to show us some authentic conviction that there will be a change. I'm not convinced. Talking about processes all day, it's not going to happen until we, as people and as leaders, and you, as Minister of National Defence, can actually take a step that transcends the process.

• (1155)

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, first of all, I want to thank you very much for the very topical question. This is something I have not only taken very seriously from day one but also had the experience inside the Canadian Armed Forces showing why that culture change is absolutely needed. This is why, from day one, when I came in, we've been looking at how we're going to create that type of culture change. Passing Bill C-77 was so important to victims because—

**Ms. Nelly Shin:** Minister, part of cultural shift is confession and owning up to things. Are you willing to admit that you could have done things more responsibly a few steps back? Shift isn't going to happen unless we really humble ourselves and admit. It's not about saving face. It's about being truthful. Bureaucracy and all this red tape in the system are not there to control us. They're there to help us bring about justice.

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

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Madam Chair, I just want to speak to that point. It's an important one.

First, about culture change, I agree absolutely. I don't want anybody to finish up a statement and think that I don't believe in culture change. This is something that is extremely important to me. I'm sorry, as ministers and as politicians, we are not almighty, nor should we ever be. No politician should ever wield the power to start an investigation, because they could also end one. I can give countless examples of why that is so wrong.

When I talk about process, this not about deflecting. This is about bringing about justice for somebody who comes forward. Would you want to be the person who comes forward and, by the time it goes through an actual court case, doesn't get that just outcome? That's what's at stake here: a just outcome for the individual—

**The Chair:** I'm sorry, Minister. That's really all the time we have for that question. You can continue when Mr. Serré is asking questions.

Mr. Serré, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Marc Serré (Nickel Belt, Lib.):** Mr. Minister, I'd like you to continue along the lines of what was just asked of you regarding the culture change: what you've done, what needs to be done and how to continue the work. No one has to question your integrity here. You've done a lot of work since 2015, but the processes that are in place pre-date you.

Can you elaborate on what was just asked of you, Minister?

Thank you.

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan:** Culture change is something we're all committed to. I believe that in the committee here, there are some wonderful recommendations that can be provided, but also a need to look at changes that need to be made.

We need to make sure we just don't look at a report, look at a recommendation, sign off, and think it's done. For example, I can list off a whole bunch of things, but ultimately I'm always looking at what results we are creating on the ground.

When somebody is joining, are they in basic training and having a safe environment? If something comes up, whether it's a religious conversation, a gender issue, LGBTQ rights, or anything, we should immediately address it, because the Employment Equity Act states that we must.

Do we have the right action groups? Do they have the right governance structure? This is what the independent panel on systemic racism, gender bias and LGBTQ rights is currently doing: looking at where those issues are, digging deep inside the Canadian Armed Forces and looking at what changes are needed.

We need to create a much greater pipeline, and we've started that. I talked about the numbers, and right now, those aren't the metrics we want to judge ourselves by, but you know what? That's progress. It's not success. Going from six to 14 general officers is important, but the pipeline—when you look below that and when you create a greater pipeline—can never be stopped.

Why was it, with regard to the representation of women, that the percentages were obviously nothing to be proud of? If it was 15% women in the past, why didn't we have 15% women before? One of my goals was to immediately start making those changes, so when somebody had a complaint, they could come forward, regardless of retribution.

When I sign off on any general officers, I don't look at what their ability to command is; I trust they can do that. The question I ask is, "Are these persons leaders who can bring in cultural change?" If they are not, we don't want them being promoted, but if they are, we want to give them proper resources to do so.

We also need to make sure we have senior women at the table, so that we have proper representation. This is not the be-all and end-all, but it does make sure that we have the right people to put the right structures in place. We need to look at how the independent investigations are conducted. We need to take a look at whether we have the right resources in place, so that people are supported.

The one question I have for the judge advocate general is, if somebody has done something in the past, would it be acceptable for them to join the Canadian Armed Forces? If somebody does something inside the Canadian Armed Forces, why can't we get them out sooner? Those also have to go through proper legal checks and balances, because ultimately I can't make a decision on that. That's the law.

We have to follow the law, and if changes need to be made, we go through a parliamentary process to get those laws changed, so that we can create the proper changes. Ultimately, all of us—including this committee, and I look forward to your recommendations—need to be able to do the ripple effect of any recommendation to see how it can actually have that impact.

Too often in the past, what we have done and where we made some changes, they actually didn't achieve the outcomes we wanted. When I became minister, that was the last thing I wanted, giving out these speeches. I wanted to be focused on the metrics themselves and the changes we're making.

We have made progress, and we're proud of that progress, but obviously, this is not enough. I'm deeply hurt that we couldn't move forward, and I wish we had a magic wand to make all this go away, but we don't. At the same time, I didn't quit before, when I was serving to support the people, and I'm not going to quit now.

I'm committed to our Canadian Armed Forces and to ensuring we create an inclusive environment, because there are people in Canada right now who want to serve their country. They deserve to have a harassment-free workplace so they can reach their true potential. We're not going to stop until we achieve that, regardless of how long it takes.

• (1200)

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you for your service.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much, Minister. I want to thank you for your service, and thank the departmental members and other witnesses who have come.

You will be free to go unless you want to stay for a second panel.

On our second panel, we are pleased to have with us, already introduced, Lieutenant-General Wayne Eyre. We look forward to your testimony. As well, we have Lieutenant-General Frances Allen, who is Canada's military representative to the NATO military committee in Brussels, Belgium.

Each of you will have five minutes for your comments.

We'll begin with you, Lieutenant-General Wayne Eyre.

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, I don't have prepared remarks per se, but I will give you a few comments.

First of all, thank you for the opportunity to address this committee.

I will say up front that the current circumstances have shaken us, and I believe the armed forces are at an inflection point—an inflection point that we have to seize as an opportunity to come out better and make it a better place to serve all Canadians.

We don't pretend to have all the answers. I certainly don't, and we have to be very open to ideas coming from the grassroots level, from outside experts. At the same time, we have to ensure that victims are supported in coming out, telling their stories, and bringing up allegations in whatever form they take.

We're in the process of rapidly developing a plan to go forward, but it has to be informed by the experts and by our grassroots, and

that's what I hope to accomplish here. We are here to listen, and also to learn from you.

Thank you.

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

Lieutenant-General Allen, you have five minutes as well.

**Lieutenant-General Frances J. Allen (Military Representative of Canada, NATO Military Committee in Brussels, Belgium, Department of National Defence):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Like the CDS, I don't have any prepared comments, but I certainly am happy to be here today to take part in the conversation and to provide you with my perspective on any questions you may have.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Then right away we will plunge into our questions. I believe we are starting with Ms. Sahota, for six minutes.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here as well. We appreciate your time.

General Eyre, you have stated that Canada's military culture needs to, must and will change. Unfortunately, that has been the stated aim of many CDSs before you, yet there has been little progress. What significant differences in approach will you take to ensure a different outcome?

• (1205)

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** We have to learn why previous approaches did not work, learn from that and incorporate those lessons into our plan going forward.

As we go forward, I see us moving forward on two streams. The first stream is that any external review that looks at our organization we have to embrace and fully support with the realization that we don't have all the answers. Then we have to look at and embrace any recommendations that come out of that, including, if necessary, an independent reporting chain to give all our members the confidence—or to restore the confidence—that their allegations will be properly looked into.

Second, and of more urgency, are the internal actions we need to take. I have talked about listening and learning. Ensuring that victim support is in place is an immediate priority. We have to respect due process for the ongoing investigations.

With regard to Op Honour in particular, I believe—and I have heard from many—that perhaps this operation has culminated and that we need to harvest what has worked from there, learn from what hasn't, and go forward with a deliberate change plan, a deliberate plan that includes not only members of the Canadian Armed Forces but also our public servant colleagues as well.

We need to align our internal organizations, because we have disparate pockets that are focused on this problem, and perhaps better alignment is required amongst the different organizations.

We have to continue to implement the provisions of Bill C-65 and then Bill C-77 and, along with that, the restorative engagement that comes with the final settlement.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Thank you, General. I apologize if I cut you short. I have limited time, and I want to ask a few questions.

Have you put in place any new measures since becoming the acting CDS?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Understand that I have only been in the job for several weeks. One of the things I immediately asked for was an *aide-mémoire*—a playbook, if you will—to help me deal with any further incidents of senior leader misconduct, so that we could rapidly deal with those. That was one.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Could we get a copy of that?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** It's still a draft at this point. Once it is finalized, we will be happy to share that.

As for the second one, last week I had all our general and flag officers on a Teams session. If there's one thing the pandemic has taught us, it is how to use technology, so it was all of our general and flag officers from across the world: deployed in operations, on exchange outside of the country, and here in Canada. I talked about the current circumstances, but I also laid out my expectations with regard to conduct, leadership, listening, etc.

Those are two of the immediate actions.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Thank you.

Central to the military ethos is the trust and confidence of subordinates in their senior leaders, and that those leaders lead by example. There are media reports that indicate that there are other senior officers who may be guilty of the behaviour you're looking to eradicate. How will you ensure that they are investigated?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Every allegation deserves a full investigation, and we have to respect our values of due process and the rule of law. Every allegation that comes forward will be investigated and will follow due process.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** Is a consensual and public relationship between a senior officer and a subordinate an offence?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** If it is in the chain of command, one reporting to the other, it creates what we call an "adverse relationship". If it is not in the same chain of command, it is not an offence, but we have to make very sure that there is not a perceived conflict of interest.

One thing we need to get much better at understanding, though, in this case of rank differential, is power dynamics.

**Ms. Jag Sahota:** General, a military organization has a clearly defined authority hierarchy. Military members wear their ranks visibly on their uniforms.

Would you agree that generally a subordinate member is expected to follow a request of a senior member, even if the senior member is not directly in that subordinate's reporting culture?

• (1210)

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, yes.

Along with that power comes responsibility as well. One of the things we have to get much better at understanding is human power dynamics, especially in a fairly rigid military hierarchy. Understanding what constitutes the use of that power is something that we need to bake into all of our leadership training, so our leaders at all levels have a firm understanding of that.

**The Chair:** Very good.

Now we're going to Ms. Sidhu, for six minutes.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** Thank you, Madam Chair. General Eyre and General Allen, thank you for joining us today.

Over the course of this study, I hope we'll be able to hear directly from survivors in the coming weeks.

Could you tell us if either of you have had any direct conversation with the survivors of sexual misconduct? What have you learned from them? What measures can be used to empower them?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, over the course of the last several weeks, a number of survivors have reached out to me. I've established contact to listen to their stories.

One thing that is apparent to me is that we need to bring in some mechanism whereby survivors can achieve closure, perhaps where they don't necessarily want to follow a legal process. I am very keen to learn more and to see the wider restorative engagement efforts as part of a final settlement coming and perhaps as a learning opportunity to bring in some form of reconciliation process. There's much more to learn here.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** General, have experts in gender-based violence and trauma been involved in the efforts to address sexual violence in the Canadian Armed Forces? Can you elaborate?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, I cannot speak definitively on what consultation occurred before I got into this chair. Definitely, going forward, they need to be part of the conversation and part of the solution.

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

We have heard stories recently where the officers who complain of sexual misconduct are outranked by the person they are investigating, or that commanding officers may intervene in the investigation.

Can you tell us the procedure that you expect to be put in place to ensure investigations are truly independent?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** In terms of interference in any investigation, the investigators have the recourse to put in a complaint with the Military Police Complaints Commission if they feel their investigation is being unduly influenced. I understand that you have the commanding officer of the Canadian Forces national investigation service talking to you on Thursday, who will be able to provide you a much more detailed response to that question.

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

General Allen, you have had a long and impressive career in which you have worked your way up through the ranks into your new role, which effectively makes you the highest-ranking woman in the history of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Over your many years of service, can you tell us about the change of culture around these issues?

General Eyre, or General Allen, do you think you have seen improvement?

**The Chair:** General Allen.

**LGen Frances J. Allen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I always defer to the acting CDS first for comments, if he would like to make them.

Certainly, Madam Chair, as somebody who has been in the Canadian Forces for 37 years, I have seen a marked change in the same way that we have seen it in Canadian society. However, that is not to say there are not still changes that need to be done and improvements that need to be made. I think progress has taken place over the time of my career, but there is still much more to do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Creating a safe and supportive working environment to all members of the armed forces will hopefully be among your top priorities in the position.

Can you tell us what to expect your first steps to address harassment will be in the coming weeks and months? What is your plan going forward?

• (1215)

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, we absolutely have to create an armed forces where all feel not only physically safe, but psychologically safe as well, where all members feel that they truly belong, where they can speak up when they see something that

doesn't look right, and where they can feel free to identify that as an issue.

That was one of my key messages to our general and flag officer cadre about creating that command climate where all feel safe, where all feel included. It's that type of culture change. We have to get right down to the lowest level. Part of that is understanding the power dynamics I've talked about, but very shortly we're going to be producing a much more proscriptive code of professional military conduct. This goes beyond our current doctrinal manual, "Duty with Honour", to add much more detail as to what is expected under each of our values, and then we need to hold ourselves to account.

**Ms. Sonia Sidhu:** There's obviously more work to be done, but the government has taken several key steps towards ending sexual misconduct in the armed forces as part of Operation Honour. It also passed the declaration of victims rights and created a sexual misconduct response centre.

To both generals, is there any other advice you can give us?

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

Now we're going to Madame Larouche.

[*Translation*]

You have six minutes.

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

It's a pleasure to continue the discussion. I hope that my connection is better than it was in the first hour. I want to apologize to all the committee members and witnesses.

Mr. Eyre and Ms. Allen, it's truly an honour to have you here today. I'd like to make a few comments before I ask my question.

The figures are alarming: 4.3% of women in the regular force and 7% of women in the reserve force reported that they had been sexually assaulted in the context of the military workplace. The figures are 1.1% to 1.2% for men. There's also the issue of the higher prevalence of sexual assault in the military workplace among certain groups of women: indigenous women, women who are members of a visible minority, women who are junior non-commissioned members and other women. In addition, 28% of women in the regular force and 34% of women in the reserve force have experienced sexual or discriminatory behaviour, compared to 13% of men.

I'm sharing this information because I've recently been attending various United Nations meetings that clearly show that the issue of violence is directly related to the concept of equity and equality between men and women. To ensure that more women feel that they belong in the military, follow in Ms. Allen's footsteps, and hold senior positions in the institution, the key is to build their confidence.



I want to hear your thoughts on this matter before I continue with my questions.

[English]

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, it is absolutely essential that we address this. In fact, I view it as existential for the Canadian Armed Forces. It's a paradox that as our nation's population grows, our traditional recruiting pool is shrinking.

If we cannot attract the talent that is resident in all Canadians into our ranks, this is bigger than a military problem. This is a national problem, because the threats to our country are not getting any less. In fact, they're increasing. Therefore, if we cannot attract the best that Canada has to offer, that's going to pose a problem for our country.

[Translation]

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

Ms. Allen, do you want to add anything or should I continue with my questions?

[English]

**LGen Frances J. Allen:** In addition to, I think, the efforts and the steps we have to take to attract people from all sorts of diverse backgrounds, but especially women, into the Canadian Forces, we have to take a look at what we need to do as an institution to create the structure and eliminate whatever systemic or institutional bias there may be that will have people opting for choices that perhaps mean that staying with a career in the Canadian Forces is not something they feel they can do. Therefore, taking a look at our institution at the same time is also very important to us so we can ensure that everyone sees a path for themselves in having a career in the Canadian Forces.

• (1220)

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** Mr. Eyre, in one of your responses earlier, you briefly spoke about the importance of a mechanism to properly support survivors so that they can file complaints. You also spoke about a reconciliation process.

I would like you to elaborate on this. How would a reconciliation process help survivors along the way?

[English]

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, I wish I could. I am in the process of learning about this, and I need to learn more, because from what I'm hearing it offers great potential for victims to achieve that closure.

Over the coming weeks, I'll have some experts come in and talk about the restorative engagement piece. If there's something we can learn for a wider effort across the armed forces for that, I would welcome it.

Thank you.

[Translation]

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

You also spoke about Bill C-65 and Bill C-77 and the implementation of certain measures.

Can you reiterate what you feel is most important in this area?

[English]

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, I think we're talking about Bill C-65 and Bill C-77. I can tell you right now that we're putting much effort into their implementation within the Canadian Armed Forces and DND in terms of victims' rights, workplace harassment and violence.... That all plays a part in the wider efforts to change our culture.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche:** In your opinion, these types of concrete measures could help change the culture of silence that exists in the military and that puts too many women in situations in which they don't know where to file a complaint. As stated earlier, the steps must be clarified.

Do you have a suggestion for how to raise awareness regarding their recourse options?

You also spoke about the establishment of an independent external oversight committee to get survivors out of their situation and give them more support.

You brought up these measures and I would have liked to hear more about them. However, I think that my time is up, so I'll try to come back to them later.

[English]

**The Chair:** Your time is up. I'm sorry.

We're going to move to Ms. Mathyssen for six minutes.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the witnesses.

It has been six years since the Deschamps report outlined some of those key recommendations that needed to be implemented. You talked a bit about your plans going forward. They sound very hopeful. I look forward to seeing how they potentially could change things, as we definitely need that change.

Can you talk about implementing the rest of the Deschamps report and your plans for that specifically? What kinds of allocations do you need for that? Can you go into that detail?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, our plans are very immature at this point. We need to do a stock-taking as to where we are in terms of the implementation of the 10 recommendations that came out of the Deschamps report and from other reports as well, including the OAG report and the reports out of your own committee. We need to take a look at where we are and what else we need to do. I'm unfortunately not in a position yet to state the exact measures to be taken.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** There was a reference that the Canadian Armed Forces had already implemented two of them. Have you seen a change from that yet? Has that been noticeable?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, are we talking specifically about the Deschamps report?

Do you recall which two recommendations?

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** I don't have them in front of me. There was just a reference that two had already been implemented and that they had seen change amongst them. If you don't know, that's all right.

In terms of that restorative justice platform or in terms of the changes you're seeing, the minister mentioned that six out of 14 of the top key positions are now held by women. One of the things I'm concerned about is that while obviously it's incredibly important that women be equal in terms of that representation and that balance, it's also important that they're being given the support to hold those positions, and that they're not just placed as figureheads or as something that you can point to and say, "Here's an example of what we're doing. Isn't it great? Here are these women and here are their names."

It's important that they're actually provided with the support required to help with that change and are not being held entirely responsible for fixing everything that has gone wrong. Could you talk about that and about your plans around supporting those positions?

• (1225)

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** That is a very important question because whoever we select for leader positions, the first considerations are setting both the individual and the institution up for success. It's having the skills, the attributes and the experience to be able to be successful in that position.

I could tell you from my previous job as the army commander that we have an unprecedented number of women as commanding officers of combat arms units. This is very non-traditional, but they were selected not because they're women, but because they're good. As we take a look around the world today, a number of our missions are being commanded by these very same leaders, who are doing exceptional work.

One of the challenges we face is our system. How long does it take to get a general officer with 25 or 30 years of experience? It takes 25 or 30 years. We have a tremendous crop at the lieutenant-colonel commander level that is coming up through the system now. They will have the operational experience, the skills and the credibility to really lead this institution, but it's going to take some time.

In the meantime, every general officer we appoint is on my recommendation and is someone who I am absolutely confident has the skills, the attributes and the experience to succeed.

Thank you.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Of course, these conversations can't just be about women. They need to be about leadership for and support of LGBTQ service people. It needs to be in support of those who identify as transgendered.

What are your plans to ensure that people who identify in those groups are supported as well?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, that's another excellent question.

In my view, one of the fundamental roles of a leader at any level is to understand the personal circumstances of each and every one of their subordinates, treat them as individuals, cater to them, support them and give them the development they need to thrive in the organization. That same sort of attitude has to permeate its way down the ranks.

We have seen in our history far too many cases where leaders, for whatever reason, have been exclusionary and have not included everybody in the team. That absolutely has to change, because our success is predicated on teamwork. As the face of Canada changes, the faces of our teams are changing. If we can't embrace that sense of teamwork, we're not going to be able to succeed operationally going into the future.

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** We heard a great deal about the different forms of education that are taking place regularly, and the increase in that education that members of the armed forces have to go through to ensure they receive education on all forms—about those who are transgendered and understanding all those different sexual orientations, identities and even racial backgrounds. That's all included within that education as well.

**The Chair:** That's the end of your time.

We're going now to Ms. Alleslev in the second round, for five minutes.

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

Would all reports of alleged sexual misconduct, disciplinary actions or any infractions in a military member's career be in his or her personnel file?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, that depends on the nature of the infraction. If it was criminal or a code of service discipline, it would be on the conduct sheet. If it was administrative in nature or remedial measures, generally they stay on the file.

That policy changed at a certain point. I can't remember the exact year, but generally they would remain on the personnel file, especially in terms of a recorded warning or a counselling and probation, two of our more significant remedial measures.

• (1230)

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Perfect.

Testimony at the defence committee stated that there were no complaints, allegations, investigations or administrative actions in General Vance's personnel file or his conduct sheet when the CF-NIS and the NSA investigated his behaviour as part of the vetting process to become CDS.

Is it possible for a conduct sheet or a personnel file to be tampered with?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, anything is possible. I have not seen the individual's personnel file, so I really don't have anything more to add on that.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** What are the processes in place to audit and review personnel files and conduct sheets to ensure that they have not been tampered with and that they are, in fact, an accurate reflection of the military member's conduct?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, I don't have that answer at my fingertips. I will take that question on notice.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** Could you get us that process, the audit and the reports of the audits over the last three to five years? That would be great, thank you.

In the promotion process, are personnel files and conduct sheets reviewed, or are only the personnel evaluation reports, or PERs, reviewed?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, generally, as part of a promotion board, it is the member's file that includes personnel reports and course reports, and the conduct sheet is part of that.

Going forward, we are putting much more science into the selection of our senior leaders in terms of psychometric testing, emotional intelligence and modified 360-degree assessments to give subordinates a say in identifying potentially toxic behaviours in their leaders. We started this work last fall. It's going to rapidly progress. We're going to start at the most senior levels and then work down, but I'm quite excited about the work we're doing here to add more rigour to the selection of our leaders.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** You mentioned that all allegations need to be investigated, but what we have also heard is that there is an absolute reluctance to bring allegations forward formally, or even informally, but there is often information, or rumours, for want of a better term.

Would you consider it also a responsibility of senior members of the military to investigate? I don't mean in a formal investigation, but as part of their normal responsibilities as an officer, should they look into the conduct of their peers and their subordinates?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, I believe it's incumbent. This is going to be a judgment issue depending on the nature of the rumour, but it's incumbent on us, if there is smoke, to do a check to make sure there is no fire behind it. Again, though, every case is going to be different.

**Ms. Leona Alleslev:** *The Fifth Estate* reported recently that senior officers interfered in sexual assault investigations and that information was lost and therefore other offences were downgraded or cut out, and many other angles from that.

How will you ensure that no investigation will be at risk of being compromised by senior officers in the chain of command interfering?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, I can't speak to the veracity of those reports; however, given the independence of the Canadian Forces national investigation service and the independence of their investigators, if they believe that their investigation is being

unduly interfered with, they have the absolute right to go to the Military Police Complaints Commission to lodge a complaint to that independent body.

**The Chair:** Very good.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serré, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you so much, General Eyre and General Allen, for your service and also for your ideas and thoughtful comments about how to move forward.

My question, General Eyre—and I'll ask General Allen too—is this: We want to focus here on victims, on the survivors and on moving forward. Because you have been in the job only a few weeks, you referred earlier to looking at closure versus legal steps, and the challenges with that. You say you want to learn more.

What can we, as a committee, do to help you as to suggestions on how to gather that information? Can you expand a bit on that?

I'd like to hear General Allen, too, to see how you can expand to be listening more to the CAF members who are looking for closure.

• (1235)

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, I find your committee reports of great use. That is one venue.

In terms of looking for ideas, we have to take them from where they may appear. You talked about finding a way for closure. One of the challenges, and I haven't mentioned this before, is the duty to report. That is part of the law we must follow, but at times it may prove to be an impediment for somebody coming forward. We have to take a close look at how we could change that, from perhaps a duty to report to a duty to respond, fully taking the victim's wishes into consideration.

We haven't cracked the nut on that one yet. We haven't cracked the code, but I think we need to take a very close look at that one going forward.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** General Allen, do you have anything to add?

**LGen Frances J. Allen:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

As General Eyre identified, we have to take a look at those opportunities. We spoke about restorative engagement, which is going to be part of the Heyder and Beattie class action lawsuit, and what Bill C-77 will provide as part of that. However, we need to look also at the opportunity for people simply to speak outside the structured format of an administrative action or a disciplinary action, to share and have conversations and discuss how certain sets of circumstances either affect them directly or affect them as leaders within the organization. Then we can have a more robust conversation around the impacts of these types of activities, because that becomes the learning process. That becomes the discussion process in which we normalize conversations and differing perspectives on issues that take you down the avenue and down the road of cultural change.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you for that.

I'll go back to General Eyre with this question, and I want to hear from General Allen also on this. When we look at recruitment, this is so important. There has been a lot of media, a lot of politicization, a lot of attacks directed at the minister, but in terms of the family here, how do we deal with assuring that young men and women who want to have a career in the Canadian Armed Forces are safe?

What is your message to them today, moving forward, that this is a good career for them?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, I think it's just that. This is a good career for them. We are seized with making a difference and making sure that they can not only see themselves in the organization, but truly feel part of it.

I'll be quite frank here. One of the challenges we have is attraction. Over the course of the pandemic, our recruiting throughput has greatly shrunk. Over the course of the last year, it's about a third of what we normally have, so we're in a bit of a recruiting deficit right now. We are still very much prioritizing diversity, but the challenge is attraction.

I'll go back to one of my previous comments about this becoming a national security issue, existential for us, because of the increasing threats in our society. Therefore, I believe this recruiting challenge goes beyond the military, and I would ask all of you as parliamentarians to engage with your constituents and help us with recruiting diversity into our ranks, help us with recruiting all Canadians and showing that this is service to their country and we need them.

**Mr. Marc Serré:** Thank you for your thoughtful comments. Thank you for your suggestions. We look forward as a committee to hearing more witnesses with solutions to move forward.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

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

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

I want to thank Lieutenant-General Eyre and Lieutenant-General Allen once again for joining us today.

Yes, Mr. Eyre, I was referring to Bill C-65. I know that you're looking at workplace harassment and Bill C-77, which amends the National Defence Act and makes related changes. I gather that work will be done once the bills have been implemented. If you want to add anything, you can do so.

When I was talking about an external oversight committee, I was referring to a recommendation in Marie Deschamps' report, which dates back to 2015 and which recommended the creation of an independent body to handle reports of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

According to a March 9, 2021, article in the *Globe and Mail*, the Government of Canada was looking at creating an independent body to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct, racism and discrimination. The article talked about current cases of sexual misconduct that affected various communities, including indigenous and LGBTQ+ communities, along with racialized women.

What structure is currently in place to handle reports of sexual misconduct and what's the reporting relationship between this structure and the Canadian Armed Forces?

• (1240)

[*English*]

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, that is an excellent question, and one for which I do not have the answer at this point. This has to be part of our deliberate plan going forward, looking at the efficacy of an external oversight committee like that, but I do not have an answer at this point.

[*Translation*]

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

Ms. Allen, you can answer the question too, if you want.

How could an independent investigative body help improve the process for reporting sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Ms. Allen, as a woman, you may have an opinion about an independent process.

[*English*]

**LGen Frances J. Allen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There certainly is great value that can come from external resources in providing expertise, advice and knowledge as to how we can best support individuals who have been affected by sexual misconduct in the military, as well as any form of harassment and discrimination.

We should continue to be seeking the type of input that guides the plans we will have moving forward on how we are going to address some of the institutional changes we may want to implement to create that dialogue and to have those voices be heard. At the same time, I think we want to make sure we're listening to internal voices that are complemented by the external voices as part of that conversation.

As it pertains—

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

I was so enthralled with all the answers that I forgot we were in round two and that was only two and a half minutes for Madame Larouche.

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

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

I wanted to expand a bit on the fact that we have seen incredible losses, even just last week with Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor. Have you thought about putting in place things that can be improved upon to identify and support people who haven't quite got there, who hopefully have not left yet but are almost at that breaking point of leaving their careers? Or are there mechanisms already?

What protocols or processes do you have in place? What supports do you have in place to help identify and support the women who are almost at that point but whom you could stop and recognize to correct things and provide the support they need to ensure this incredible resource isn't lost?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, this is a very troubling issue.

I had the privilege of serving with Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor. I've been in contact with her over the last few days. She's a tremendous officer. I saw her in combat in Kandahar, commanding a company of 100 to 120 plus soldiers in probably one of the most dangerous places in Afghanistan.

Our exchange was one of mutual respect, but what I said was that I respect and support her decision. That's a message to anybody who is in that situation. Everybody has a personal calculus as to whether they can change the situation better from the outside or from the inside. My message down the chain of command as our people are getting to that decision point—or even before it—is to have the conversation. Have the conversation as to where the biggest impact can be to make our institution a better place.

In terms of a formal process, we are not there yet. I'm not sure if we have to be, other than having those really heart-to-heart conversations.

• (1245)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen:** Just quickly, the SMRC showed a 29% increase from 2018-19 to 2019-20, in individuals who contacted them. Do you have an understanding of why there was such a substantial increase in those numbers?

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, that's the end of your time.

We're going to Ms. Wong for five minutes.

**Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to both witnesses.

My question is for both of you.

Our military organization has a clearly defined authority hierarchy. Military members wear their rank visibly on their uniform. For both of you, would you agree that generally a subordinate member is expected to follow a request of a senior member even if the se-

nior member is not directly in that subordinate's reporting structure?

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, the military is founded on discipline. Given that we're the only organization in our society that is charged to apply deadly violence on behalf of the state, we absolutely have to have that discipline in place, so we expect subordinates to follow the orders of their superiors. However, this gets back to the question as to what is a proper order and what is the proper use of power. We have to get much better at ensuring that our leaders at all levels have a firm understanding of that.

I'll ask General Allen if she wants to pile in here for her perspective.

**LGen Frances J. Allen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would concur with the CDS, in the sense that yes, absolutely, our rank structure requires that junior members listen to and obey the direction of senior members. However, as the CDS said, there is a context that is associated with that.

Certainly, in the execution of activities and operations that are under way, this type of a structure is quite critical to the execution of military operations in a safe and effective way. That being said, there needs to be a way in which individuals, if they are concerned they are being asked to engage or undertake an activity that they have concerns about, can go to their chain of command and identify concerns.

Again, it's finding this line between what is necessary for immediate, effective operations and an opportunity for individuals to reflect and consult on the best way forward in this. It's a bit of a knife's edge to walk along. However, I think we can create an environment in which this dichotomy between directly following rules and orders and being allowed to question and propose alternatives can coexist within the Canadian Forces.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Hon. Alice Wong:** My next question is, if there's a relationship between a male of a higher rank and a woman of a lower rank, even if she's not directly in his chain of command, how would you determine if the relationship is consensual and not an abuse of authority?

• (1250)

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** Madam Chair, this would be a delicate question, given privacy and the like, but very necessary that the individual's chain of command asks some delicate but probing questions. Again, this comes down to understanding the power dynamics.

I'll ask General Allen whether she wants to jump in with a further clarification.

**LGen Frances J. Allen:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would even construct that question without the gender. If we were talking about a woman of a higher rank and a man of a lower rank, it is that power dynamic element that General Eyre spoke to that is the area we are trying to find, that we need to create that balance around and be quite careful about. In the hierarchical structure we have, there must not be an opportunity for an abuse of power or a perception of a requirement to concede to demands based upon rank.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Now for our final round of questions, we go to Ms. Dhillon for five minutes.

**Ms. Anju Dhillon:** My colleague, Ms. Vandenberg, will be taking that spot. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Then we will have Ms. Vandenberg for five minutes.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much. It's nice to be subbing at this committee, which I participated in earlier in my parliamentary career. There's good work that this committee can do in terms of recommendations.

I also welcome and congratulate our two guests we have today. This is the first time General Eyre is appearing before this committee as the acting chief of the defence staff. I congratulate General Allen on her appointment as the first female vice-chief of the defence staff. Your careers have been incredible. You're incredibly qualified. These are incredibly meritorious. General Allen, in looking at your career history, you have served our country very nobly. I am very pleased to welcome both of you here.

I have a question for both of you, and would ask that you both respond. In the discussions, and when we're listening to survivors, we often hear there are policies and processes that we put in place that are very well intentioned. We've put a number of those in place since 2015, but sometimes they can have unintended consequences, so there's a need to constantly evolve and review.

I noticed, General Eyre, you mentioned the duty to report. We all struggle with the concept of bystanders and the obligations of bystanders. I also know that taking consent away from a person, taking agency and power from a person regarding where they want to go and whether they want to have an investigation.... Many people need to go through processes first. They need to start with counselling, peer support, discussing options, and then, once they get to the point of comfort, they may actually proceed with a formal complaint and an investigation. It doesn't always happen that somebody would jump right from zero to "I want to make a formal complaint".

What are the processes in place that would give survivors and those impacted, who we know are men and women and non-binary, the opportunity to seek out for themselves what they need and what they want to have happen? How do they keep that agency and pow-

er over what the end result will be? If you could both please answer that, it would be great.

**LGen Wayne D. Eyre:** As we go forward with policy development, the lens we have to take is one from a victim's perspective. How do we make this better for the victim? The duty to report is one example. I'm sure there are other policies out there. Again, as we take stock of where we are, and which policies need to be looked at through that lens, at what point does it become a criminal investigation, if ever, and who conducts that investigation?

Currently, there is some optionality in terms of whether the investigation occurs through the military police, CFNIS, or through the civilian system? The victim has some say in that. As you speak to the commanding officer of CFNIS, perhaps he can expound on that.

Looking at the challenge, principally, through a victim's lens, is the way we need to go forward on this one.

● (1255)

**LGen Frances J. Allen:** I would add that it is very much that sensitivity to allowing people to have agency over how they wish to share that information, and what they want done with that information as it goes forward. That speaks to the benefit of the SMRC, and that it is separate from the Canadian Forces, where members can seek advice and support.

As Dr. Preston described to the committee before, part of the process is to always be ready to guide the member if working towards reporting is something they wish to do, to help them look at what their options are and how they might wish to go forward with that, and to help people forward.

Certainly, the SMRC fulfills a good role. There are probably more options, and you've seen that through the programs that Dr. Preston has been looking to put in place, which will allow people to even seek support outside of the SMRC itself, through civilian entities that may be nearby.

The point that was raised is absolutely correct. We have to keep thinking about those types of issues as we are developing our solutions base moving forward.

**Ms. Anita Vandenberg:** I know that in recent years—

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, that's the end of our time.

I want to thank our witnesses. I want to thank you both for your service to our country and for your testimony today on this very sensitive matter.

I want to thank all the members of the committee as well.

Is it the pleasure of the committee to adjourn?

Seeing it is, the meeting is adjourned. I'll see you on Thursday.









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