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Chair

Mr. Stephen Fuhr

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.)): Good afternoon and welcome to the defence committee.

We are going to continue with our study of diversity within the Canadian Armed Forces. We actually haven't been on this topic since October 18, so it's been a while.

I want to welcome our guests. From A New Dynamic Enterprise, we have Sandra Perron, and from the WPS Group, we have Kristine St-Pierre. Thank you both for coming.

I'm going to yield the floor to Ms. Perron. I'll give you up to 10 minutes for your opening remarks. The floor is yours.

Ms. Sandra Perron (Senior Partner, A New Dynamic Enterprise Inc.): Thank you very much for the invitation, ladies and gentlemen.

Thirty-five years ago, I joined the military as a logistics officer, and subsequently became an infantry officer when the Human Rights Tribunal removed all the legal barriers to the employment of women in combat. I say “legal barriers”, because to think that all other barriers were removed is nothing less than a myth.

I won't go into details about my career, first of all because I wrote a bestseller and all the details are in there. It's being made into a movie, and I don't want to sell the punchline. However, the real reason is that the easiest thing for leaders to do is to look back on my experiences and say, “Well, things have changed. That was then; this is now. We don't do those things anymore.”

[Translation]

I want to talk to you about the reactions to my book, because they are very revealing. I received several hundred letters, notes, messages, texts and emails following the publication of my book *Out Standing in the Field*. I can place all of this correspondence into four categories, which I will share with you.

In the first category are the letters from women who recognize themselves in my story. Every one of them could write her own colourful chapter about a difficult journey marked by hatred, abuse, and rejection. These letters make me very sad, not only because these things are still going on today, but because almost every one of them begins with a request that I keep their comments secret and confidential. They are afraid to tell their story, still today.

[English]

The second category is also letters from women, but these women want to reassure me that my struggles were not for naught. They are thriving in their units, well accepted and valued. “It's not perfect,” they say, “yet,” but they are grateful for the road they feel I and others have paved for them. This category always makes me do cartwheels of joy.

[Translation]

The third category are letters from men who have read my book and recognize that they could do a better job defending women, not because we are weak or princesses that need saving, but because they know that for women living in our country today, a country that is considered to be among the best places in the world to live, harassment or inequality complaints can have devastating consequences. I am pleased by this type of letter, because I see that the next women will have allies to help them meet their challenges.

Finally, the fourth and last category is the one that touches me most deeply. It consists of correspondence from men who apologize for the trouble they caused me. They read my book and recognize themselves in it, even if they weren't named. There are only a handful of those letters, but their authors recognize the harm they did to me and the damage they caused. What is remarkable about those letters is that many of these men are still serving in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Given General Vance's commitment to Operation Honour and zero tolerance, these letters signed by men who acknowledge their guilt could well mean the end of their careers. These letters give me great hope and peace of mind, because I know that these men will be better human beings, leaders, and women's champions.

[English]

There is no doubt that the CAF has veered towards making military culture more inclusive, more welcoming and more valuing of diversity, but it's too slow. Veering is not enough. We need a hard right.

Providing a soft landing for those who have suffered abuse, giving them a way of reporting sexual misconduct, and providing counselling services and medical attention: All of that is the absolute right thing to do, and the CAF must stay the course.

Hearing stories of abuse is hard and discouraging, but it's a sign that we've created an environment where victims are safe to come forward with their stories. They can tell them from a place of strength instead of a place of resentment.

• (1535)

We can't change what we don't know. We need now to go upstream and prevent these incidents from happening, and the best way to do that is to change the way men perceive women. We must challenge our paradigms in every sphere of training, deployment and HR policy.

Conflicts and generational warfare have greatly evolved since the end of the Cold War. They are complex, fast-evolving missions that require diverse competencies within the deployed battle groups, some of which can best be provided by women. Having women fully integrated and thriving within their combat teams not only reflects the change we wish to see in these failed states, but it will be instrumental in achieving it, for in these violence-plagued areas of the world where women have been abused, victimized, dispossessed and raped, it makes sense to give them hope of what could be and show them what is possible.

Now, I mentioned earlier that the easiest thing for a so-called leader to do is to look back on what went wrong and correct it for the future, but it takes visionary leaders to challenge what we are doing today and ask themselves if we will be ashamed of this in five, 10, 15 or 20 years.

Let me give you two examples of what it means to challenge our paradigms today.

The first is Silver Cross mothers. Every year, we recognize mothers who have lost children in the service of our country through the appointment of a Silver Cross Mother chosen by the Royal Canadian Legion. This is a precious and valued tradition, one that enables us to remember with great compassion the grief of mothers everywhere who have lost a child in the service of their country.

The time has come to modernize this tradition to be more inclusive of parenthood. There was a time in our history when child-rearing was mostly left to mothers, and often these same mothers were left to do so single-handedly as husbands left for war. Those were the norms, but times have changed. Although we have yet to reach equality, in our society today fathers play an ever-increasing role in their children's lives, and they should not be excluded when we remember the sacrifices made by parents, all parents.

Appointing only women as Silver Cross mothers demeans the role of fathers and contributes to the stigmatization of those who choose to take parental leave or to be a stay-at-home dad. By the same token, it perpetuates the perception that only women bear the responsibilities of raising children or that their contribution is more important. This hurts both men and women, and it's no longer representative of all families. Now some military members have two fathers, a single father or two mothers. How do you choose? Are any of their losses less worthy of recognition? It's time for Silver Cross parents.

The second example is related to the struggle of recruiting women to non-traditional roles in defence and security in the STEM fields.

We all need to invest in teaching young girls that they are limitless in their opportunities.

I volunteer with The Memory Project to go into schools and talk to them about veterans. I stand before these kids, third- and fourth-graders, with all my military medals, my parachutist wings, my military bling, and they are still waiting for Major Perron to arrive, because even today our kids have a certain vision of what a veteran looks like. It seems that adults do, too. The Canadian Mint has issued a number of coins in the last three years portraying Canadian heroes: firefighters, police officers and soldiers. All are men. One ambulance driver, a nurse, is a woman. All of them are white. We continue to perpetuate this image. Little girls grow up to consider mainly traditional fields, and then we wonder why we can't achieve our recruiting targets.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, I'll leave you with this thought.

The Canadian Armed Forces are not doing everything they could to further diversity and eliminate sexual misconduct. Sometimes they are awkward; sometimes they try so hard that they trip up, but more than anyone, I know the sacrifices our service people make, and not just on the battlefield.

Every two or three years they uproot their families. They have to find a new school, a doctor, and get new licence plates. They lose friends and long-term equity in their homes. They are far away from their families. Our military men and women deserve not only our loyalty, but also our greatest respect and admiration. To them I say: "stay the course".

[*English*]

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for those words.

I'm going to yield the floor now to Ms. St-Pierre.

The floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre (Director, The WPS Group): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Ms. Perron.

I will be making my presentation in English, but I can answer questions in French.

[*English*]

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me.

I am Kristine St-Pierre, director of the WPS Group, which brings together consultants with expertise in gender equality and women, peace and security. Over the past several years, we've been providing specific women, peace and security training to Canadian police officers deploying to international missions. Other work includes conducting gender assessments and developing organizational gender strategies.

I'm also here in my capacity as a member of the steering committee of the Women, Peace and Security Network—Canada, a volunteer network of more than 70 Canadian non-governmental organizations and individuals. The network is committed to two things: promoting and monitoring the efforts of the Government of Canada to implement and support the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, and providing a forum for exchange and action by Canadian civil society on issues related to women, peace and security.

Over the last few years, the network has been a key interlocutor with the Government of Canada when it comes to the implementation of its national action plan. I've also submitted the network's 2016 DND policy review submission as evidence to the committee.

The views I will present today are my own; however, they include consultations with colleagues, and they are informed by ongoing research and analysis conducted by the Women, Peace and Security Network—Canada.

One of the Canadian Armed Forces diversity strategy objectives is to “inculcate a culture of diversity”, which the strategy says “is to develop the military's organizational culture to be more inclusive and respectful which will demonstrate to Canadian society that the CAF truly values and embraces diversity.” I will focus my remarks today on two considerations related to that objective of inculcating a culture of diversity.

My first consideration relates to the need for an overall policy that encompasses both gender equality and diversity perspectives. DND and the Canadian Armed Forces have set out multiple commitments related to equity, equality and diversity. These include the Employment Equity Act, the legislative commitment to engage in proactive employment practices to increase representation of the four designated groups, including women; commitments under Operation Honour, which seeks to eliminate harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour in the Canadian military; the diversity strategy, aiming to “recognize, embrace and actively promote diversity as a core CAF institutional value”; commitments as part of the defence plan 2018-2023, to incorporate gender perspectives into defence planning, policy and operations; and commitments under the Canadian national action plan on women, peace and security, which focuses on improved governance, training and education, accountability, recruitment, and the integration of gender perspectives into CAF operations.

While these commitments have distinct objectives, they overlap in important ways. The success of Operation Honour in working toward creating an environment that is safe from sexual harassment and discrimination is crucial to the ability of the CAF to recruit more women and more members of diverse groups. The ability to recruit more women is crucial in fulfilling our commitments under the Canadian national action plan on women, peace and security. This

national action plan, in turn, provides an important tool for DND and the CAF to incorporate gender perspectives as part of defence planning, policy and operations abroad.

What I believe is needed is an overarching policy framework that defines the full range of commitments relating to gender equality and diversity, including the implementation of the Deschamps report and Operation Honour; Canada's commitments under its national action plan on women, peace and security; commitments related to increased diversity of the CAF, including greater participation by women; using the gender-based analysis plus across policy and operations; and eliminating sexist and homophobic attitudes and practices.

● (1545)

Doing so would be beneficial in several ways. It would ensure greater coherence among the different commitments, as well as among different units and offices within DND and CAF. It would clarify the importance placed on the various commitments, and the linkages among them. It would also facilitate communication at all levels on these matters and send a stronger signal to the public about DND and the CAF's intentions with regard to equality and diversity.

More importantly, doing so would also send a strong message of support to transformational change in the CAF's approach to its work—a message that says we're not only bringing new faces to do the same job, but we view this as an opportunity to change the way it's always been done—and a willingness to examine the very structures it brings women and other diverse groups into.

My second consideration relates to the need to work towards greater diversity in the CAF, not only because it will make the CAF more effective but also because it's a matter of equality.

The diversity strategy states that, “as a matter of practice, policy and institutional culture, we recognize, embrace and actively promote diversity as a core CAF institutional value”. However, a quick search shows that both recent CAF statements and media articles related to the diversity strategy make the case for embracing diversity on the basis of improved effectiveness. To be clear, CAF is not the only actor whose message has focused on the benefits to operational effectiveness that diversity and gender perspectives bring.

There is extensive research, especially in other industries and the business community, demonstrating the benefit of a diverse workforce and of having more women in leadership positions. For example, research shows that diverse groups tend to be smarter and make better decisions than do homogeneous ones. Companies with more women in leadership positions tend to do better financially, and business units that are more gender-diverse have better financial outcomes. The U.S. Agency for International Development also notes that “eliminating workplace discrimination against women can increase productivity.” Research shared by the Harvard Business Review shows that corporate diversity leads to greater and faster innovation. In addition, a more diverse employee pool offers improved and more accurate thinking as well as better decision-making skills.

There is no denying that a Canadian soldier who speaks Pashto can be beneficial to an operation in Afghanistan, or that women soldiers may facilitate access to local women or conduct searches of women. But at the same time, it’s important not to lose sight of the human rights and gender equality imperative and ensure that we impart these values to all personnel. Only by doing so in a deliberate and sustained manner will we see a culture change within the Canadian Armed Forces.

Specifically, it is crucial that the pursuit of diversity and the integration of gender perspectives not lead to the instrumentalization of women’s rights. One member of the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada, Margaret Jenkins, argues in a recent publication that focusing on operational effectiveness:

runs the risk of instrumentalizing women’s participation—the implication is that women are engaged in peace and security because of their distinctive contribution, and if they fail, it is because they were not effective.... Women should be full and equal participants in peace and security because they have a right to the same opportunities as men, not because of what can be potentially gained by their participation.

There are many variables that affect the success and impact of female participation and integration, including persistent gender attitudes and biases that are held by both men and women. It will be extremely difficult to address and change these deeply ingrained attitudes and biases against women and other diverse groups if we don’t instill equality and diversity as core institutional values from the beginning. It should be both the smart thing to do and the right thing to do.

• (1550)

To conclude, I would first like to acknowledge the important and ongoing work being conducted by DND and the CAF when it comes to equality and diversity. I would also like to acknowledge that the goal of inculcating a culture of diversity is a long-term process that will require sustained efforts by all members of the CAF, beginning with the leadership.

In saying that, I would like to end by calling on the importance of the defence community’s learning to leverage gender expertise, which the military lacks, from civil society—such as from the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada and others—to truly develop a nuanced understanding of how they should apply diversity and gender perspectives.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you for your testimony.

Before we get started, I think we have a translation issue where English is coming across on the French channel. Anyway, it’s reversed, but it’s there, so just push the button.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Just on translation, I know that some of the interpreters are often.... The old facility was a little quieter, but now you have the soundproof glass, so you can speak up and we can hear you. I’m always turning it up and turning it down.

The Chair: I know everybody here has at least two devices, maybe three, so just double-check that your devices are on silent, because I heard a couple of bells and whistles happening.

For those of you who have never been to committee, this sign means that whoever is speaking needs to start winding down. You will have 30 seconds, so it’s not a hard stop. You can do a graceful dismount, tie it all together, and we can move on. I have to keep the conversation going so everyone gets the requisite amount of time.

Having said that, I’m going to yield the floor to MP Spengemann for the first seven minutes of questions.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you very much, Major Perron and Madam St-Pierre, for being here. Thank you for your expertise and your service to our nation. It’s very important work.

I want to start by looking at a chart, and I want to thank our analysts for preparing it. It’s 2018 data, and it lines up the percentage of women in the armed forces in parallel to visible minorities. As we can expect, as we progress through the ranks, both with respect to women and visible minorities, beginning with privates on the NCO side and then going up into the senior ranks of master warrant officer and chief warrant officer, and from officer cadet on to general, there is a sharp drop-off in the number of women, and also in the number of visible minorities. Embarrassingly, there are only two categories, and it’s in the women’s rubric where the percentage of 20% is cracked, and that is, again, with 2018 data: female lieutenants, 24.4%, and female officer cadets, 21.1%. Everything else is south of 20%, and then in some ways, when we get into the field of generals, it embarrassingly drops to zero.

I don’t want to spend my time on the analysis of data. I’d like both of you to take a moment and qualitatively walk the committee through where the obstacles are that keep women and visible minorities from breaking through into senior ranks, both on the NCO side and on the officer side. Be anecdotal if you can. Each of you probably has some compelling stories or incidents that really could drive home why we don’t have more women or visible minorities in senior positions.

Ms. Sandra Perron: It's a very good question. The other day I was wearing a T-shirt that said, "You owe me 21 cents", and it's a T-shirt that is meant to provoke discussions about the disparity between the wages of men and women. A military friend of mine said, "Luckily, we don't have that in the military, because equal ranks have equal pay." I said that when only 10% of the senior officers are women and when 90% of deployed forces are men, it means that women are losing opportunities. Women are staying back and taking care of loved ones, of family, of the elderly, and that is taking a toll on their careers.

If we wonder why women aren't progressing, we should be looking at the number of men taking parental leave and the number of men helping out with elderly care. Still today, according to statistics, close to 70% of elderly care is being done by women. That means they lose opportunities to deploy on exercises, to punch those leadership tickets that will gain them the personnel evaluation reports to get them promoted, and the courses. I think that's a huge contribution to the reason why women are not progressing in the ranks.

• (1555)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you.

Madam St-Pierre.

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: I obviously agree.

I'd like to add that a lot of research has been done, in terms of barriers to women in the military around the world. Some may be actual barriers or the perception of barriers. We certainly have what Major Perron mentioned, such as the impact of moving on family situations and the perception of a military institution where sexual violence is endemic. That could be a perception, but also a reality. Perception prevents people from joining, but also from moving up.

There is a career penalty for motherhood and the ability to get time off. It's not just the perception because we've read it in the news, but this idea that you have to choose between your career and your family as you go up the ranks becomes even more apparent. There are socially constructed gender norms, like the male-dominated space and the notion that you have to take on masculine traits, that you have to act like a man, in order to be accepted as one of the guys. These factors add up to create an environment that is not always conducive to women wanting to remain. This applies to diverse groups as well, specifically in terms of the LGBTQ2 community. That environment of harassment and discrimination certainly has a role to play.

I think it's extremely important to want to create a conducive environment and address all the commitments that have been identified by DND and the CAF. If these commitments are carried through, all taken together, including a change of mindset and a change of culture, that could lead to some changes.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Major Perron, you served as Canada's first female infantry officer. I don't know if that came out in your opening remarks, but that is obviously to your credit.

I want to spend a moment on intersectionalities and women of visible minority status. We talk a lot about the LGBTQ2 community, but we talk less about Canadians of non-binary gender identity or expression. Do we need to pay extra attention, and how important is

that work, in juxtaposition to gender equality and visible minorities as categories of their own?

Ms. Sandra Perron: The easy answer is that, absolutely, we need to spend more time and reflect on that more. For many, it's so far outside their comfort zone. Many who are in the traditional culture have never been exposed to that. We need to talk about it, expose them, and we need to review our paradigms, with regard to all non-binary issues.

• (1600)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's my time.

Thank you, both.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next, we have MP Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My first questions are for Ms. Perron.

In his fall 2018 report, the Auditor General was particularly critical of Operation Honour, citing fragmented briefings and teachings, insufficient victim support and a lack of necessary respect for victims.

Would you provide the committee with your own thoughts on the Auditor General's report and on Operation Honour?

Ms. Sandra Perron: I think Operation Honour is the necessary evil in the sense that it has propelled us to move forward and explore issues. I do a lot of presentations to battalions, combat units, and the feeling that I'm getting is not to push Operation Honour on them. They're sick and tired of hearing about it. The backlash against women is atrocious. They feel it's because of them that they have to sit through a harassment briefing, so it's had a lot of negative impact, as well as positive. It's brought things into the open.

You cannot order soldiers to respect women, LGBT, visible minorities or any DGM group. You have to create situations where a light will appear in their mind and they'll say, "Wow, luckily we have women on board", women in their platoons who can push through this exercise in a certain way.

If we design our training so that women are valued, with scenarios like Afghanistan or Haiti, where women get to be the leaders in talking to the women who are on the belligerents' side so they can connect, men are going to see that if they didn't have women, they wouldn't be getting this information, this precious intelligence. We don't do that. We force them to respect women, and then we design obstacle courses that physically highlight women's weaknesses instead of their strengths.

That's what I mean by changing the paradigms.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Have you ever heard Op Honour referred to as "hop on 'er"?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Too many times to count.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Which regiment were you with?

[Translation]

Ms. Sandra Perron: It was the Royal 22^e Régiment.

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I did not read your book, but maybe I will, if my curiosity is sufficiently piqued. In the briefing, you mentioned that you underwent many instances of harassment, sexual abuse and rape.

Under what kind of circumstances was such an attack as rape allowed to happen to you? It happens to other women as well. It is still happening. What are the kinds of circumstances that put women in this type of vulnerable situation?

Ms. Sandra Perron: I don't think there's any one kind of circumstance. There are a range of situations where women get abused, harassed and, yes, raped. I'm not here to talk about my own situation, but I'm getting letters from women who have experienced a range of those sexual misconducts. It's different for every one of them. Sometimes they trust their leader. Sometimes they trust the colleagues they will be deploying to war with and put themselves in a situation where they become vulnerable and are abused.

I don't think there is one answer to a situation that happens more to these women than anywhere else, in any other regiment, for that matter.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Prior to Operation Honour being officially rolled out, and prior to the 2015 election, our committee was told over and over again by women in the military that whatever they did, whatever the proposed solution, they had to take the chain of command out of the investigation and the policing of the whole case.

Based on what we have now, is that still necessary to push for, taking the chain of command out of the investigation and the follow-up once an incident has been reported to the military police?

• (1605)

Ms. Sandra Perron: Absolutely, I think it's crucial.

The victims of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct are often in a position where they have to report their case to a senior officer or leader who has not been trained in dealing with investigative and interviewing processes for victims of sexual misconduct. At different levels there are blockages, perceptions and preconceived notions of women coming forward. It's also devastating to their career.

There's a reason women write to me and say, "Don't tell this to anybody." They are still afraid of the chain of command.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

From these letters, do you still get the sense that men cover up for one another?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Oh, God, yes, absolutely. Not always. There are many situations where they don't, but absolutely they will stick to one another; they will support one another.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Did you have a chance to go through the Auditor General's report?

Ms. Sandra Perron: I did.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: What kinds of questions would you have for the Auditor General based on what you read?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Do we have time to answer?

The Chair: You have about 10 seconds, but I'm pretty sure there will be time at the end to circle back to this question.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Maybe we can circle back, because we would like to ask the Auditor General these questions. I hope this committee has a chance to as well.

Ms. Sandra Perron: I'll make note of it.

The Chair: Thank you.

MP Blaney, welcome. The floor is yours.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Thank you.

Thank you both so much for being here today and for sharing your testimony. I really appreciate what you had to tell us. I think it's important we remember that when there's a predator doing what they do, it's not really up to the victim to make sure the predator doesn't get them. I just want to recognize that.

I'll start with you, Major Perron. They talked a little bit in the Auditor General's report about recruitment and some of the challenges they're facing. One of the things I didn't hear a lot about, and maybe I didn't get that part, is around promotion and retention. One of the things I can see, and it's been addressed a little bit, is that we're not seeing women get promoted, but it's also about keeping them in. Women are coming, and when they can't get that promotion—I've heard this from multiple women in the CAF—they leave, because they can get promoted in other places.

I wonder if you could touch a bit on that, and then if you want to follow up, I would appreciate it.

Ms. Sandra Perron: Women are leaving the forces for a multitude of reasons, and they're not just about promotions. Promotions and career progression would be a major factor for any woman who's worked so hard for her career. It's also about juggling all the other demands on her time with her career. If she's going to make the sacrifices and deploy for eight months to former Yugoslavia or any other theatre of war, she wants to be recognized and she wants to progress at the same rate as her peers, and according to the data, that's not happening.

Why isn't it happening? It's because what gets measured gets done, and in the units, we're not measuring the level of success and progress of women. We're not doing it at the military college level. When I sat on the board of governors for the military college, every year I said, "Why aren't we measuring the success of women?" We're measuring when they come in, when they're recruited, and then they fail out, and we don't ask why. We don't measure it. We don't observe it.

We need to get better data at every level. Corporations do this at every level. I worked for General Motors and Bombardier as an executive. We measured our DGMs at every step of their career to make sure we were doing the right things. When women weren't promoted, we did an analysis. We did problem-solving and wondered why we were losing our women. Sometimes it was work-life balance; other times it was career progression.

●(1610)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

You said that Operation Honour is messy. It's a messy part of the process. When we read the Auditor General's report, we see there is a lack of training to educate people about what to do when somebody discloses. There was a lot of concern about reporting and what would happen if you did report, and the challenges that people had in knowing. They may think, "They've told me, and now I'm their chain of command. Do I do it, or do I listen to them?" It's that women-focus part.

I want to talk a bit about what the messiness is and what might be the richness that's coming from that messiness.

Ms. Sandra Perron: We are asking leaders at every level, from sergeant up, to teach courses on diversity and harassment. They are in front of a class and they don't want to do it; they don't believe in it. They have never had problems with women themselves, so they ask why they should even be exploring the issue. The first thing they say—not always, but it's where the problem lies—when they're in front of a classroom is, "We have to do this, so you're going to put up and shut up for the next half hour. Then you're going to sign the paper that says you've been inoculated against harassment. If any one of you does anything, then I will have your name on a paper saying you knew about it."

They don't believe in it. It doesn't come from a place of conviction for them, and that's the problem.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Yes. I appreciate the difficulty of this. One of the things that I think the military is struggling with, and what I'm struggling with as an outsider, is what the internal culture is that creates this environment and how we can get to the root causes.

I don't know if you have any feedback on that.

Ms. Sandra Perron: The military is an old career. I won't say it's as old as some other careers, but men have been fighting wars for centuries and centuries. Women fighting alongside them have been doing so for only a few decades, so it's a culture that's going to be very long in the making, in evolving. That's a fact. For us to accelerate that process, we have to go upstream and create conditions in the training where women are valued, and all of a sudden men wake up to the fact that, hey, we do better at war when we have women fighting side by side—not by sitting in a classroom and learning about diversity. It's just the way it's going to happen.

If you talk to the 42 anti-armour gunners who have been to Croatia with me, you'll see that they are convinced of women's place in combat arms—before that, probably not so much. We have to create those conditions where men value women because they bring something to the table, not because they've been told and politically it's the right thing to do.

I think Kristine mentioned that.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: That's interesting, because it's really about making sure women are in those leadership roles so we can see that and it's living reality.

It brings me back to the part that so many women are hearing, the hard part of this story right now, that women can be hurt in the military. When I look at attracting, this is becoming another part of the messy process.

Ms. Sandra Perron: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: How are we going to recruit women to take these leadership roles if it doesn't feel like a safe place?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Maybe I'll leave this one to Kristine.

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: It really has to start at the beginning, with what Major Perron is doing in the schools in changing that perception, changing that mentality. Starting with the education, whether it's at RMC or even here, and showing that we can all work together is certainly a first step.

The Chair: Thank you.

The last seven-minute question will go to MP Robillard.

The floor is yours.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first questions are for Ms. Perron.

In your book *Out Standing in the Field*, you talk about the difficulties you encountered when you wanted to testify about the abuse you were subjected to.

Can you tell us what those difficulties were about?

●(1615)

Ms. Sandra Perron: First I want to say that at the time, I thought I was the problem. That is what many women think today. I thought I was causing the abuse, whether it was rape or other misconduct, rejection, or the way my colleagues treated me. I told myself I was new, that I was blazing a trail, that I was the first, and that because of that they did not understand, but that they would get used to me. That was the first reason.

The second was that I could not complain to a commander who did not believe in what I represented as a woman in the infantry. I did not think I would be supported.

The third reason was that there were a million transgressions. How could I go to the commander and say that the guys had put eggs in my boots or stolen my beret? He would have said:

[*English*]

"Suck it up, princess."

[Translation]

He would have said that now that I was in the infantry and was in the men's ballpark, so to speak, I had to endure certain things. He would have said that that was the infantry. All of these factors meant that I could not speak up. I did not feel comfortable. My personal mission was to be a member of the infantry, and everything else was secondary.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Did it take you some time to get out of that mindset?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Yes, it took me 25 years to find the courage to tell my story.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Recently the Department of Defence began providing a workshop entitled “Respect in the Canadian Armed Forces” for all of its members. These new workshops are led by experts and include discussions with the participants.

How can such workshops contribute to changing the culture in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Ms. Sandra Perron: These workshops are important. However, it's like learning to ride a bike. You can't gather a group of people in a room and tell them how to ride a bike. You have to learn on a bicycle. You have to make mistakes sometimes, fall and hurt yourself to realize that biking isn't that easy. You can provide workshops, courses and training, but that isn't how you learn respect. You have to be in situations where you learn to treat your colleagues with respect — men or women.

Mr. Yves Robillard: My next questions are for Ms. St-Pierre.

In an article you wrote about the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, you highlighted the importance of the initiatives the government has taken.

How could the Canadian Armed Forces improve their assessment of Operation Honour's impact?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: First they need to determine whether women feel more comfortable reporting misconduct. They need to see, using questionnaires and discussions, whether there has been an improvement in the possibility of reporting misconduct. Has the environment women work in improved? Do they feel safe in that environment? Is misconduct continuing? Is there respect? Is their work valued?

I think those would be ways of measuring the impact of that operation.

• (1620)

Mr. Yves Robillard: During your career, you provided training to counter sexual violence to military personnel in Nigeria. Could you talk to us about your training experience and the lessons this committee might draw from it?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: Yes. In Nigeria, I dealt with a group of female police officers. We discussed gender-based sexual violence and the way the police could accept the victims and reach them in interviews. With regard to training, I agree completely with what Ms. Perron said. Classroom training is not enough. Using scenarios and case studies, you have to put people in situations where they face various difficulties and must work together to overcome them.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: We'll go to five-minute questions now, and for the first five-minute question, we'll go to MP Fisher.

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

Thank you very much for your testimony. Thank you for being here, and thank you for your service.

I'm going to go to Major Perron. You said—and I think it was a quote from one of the letters you've received—that it's not perfect yet. You said that we're “veering” toward a better place, but too slowly, and that we “need a hard right”. So, if you were in a position where you're designing Operation Honour, what would Operation Honour look like? What are you designing? What's a hard right for you?

Ms. Sandra Perron: There are several categories of answers in there that I would pursue. The first one is that we need to go upstream to prevent those things from happening. The way we do it is that, first of all, every single woman or DGM should have a mentor of her choice, whether a man or a woman. We have mentoring programs in the military, and they're not being used.

The second example would be exit interviews. When women leave the organization, they should have three interviews to find out what their experiences are, and we should learn from them.

Another example is all the training we do, and I've mentioned this. We need to redesign it, including the obstacle courses, to highlight what different people can do. That's one of the areas that I would change with Operation Honour.

Mr. Darren Fisher: You said, “that's one of”. Would you consider it a tweak of the program, or would you consider it a drastic overhaul?

Ms. Sandra Perron: I would be prone to something in between, instead of a drastic overhaul or a tweak. I think it needs a lot more than a tweak.

The second area of that is data. We need better data. Operation Honour is keeping very minimal data on the number of transgressions or complaints. We need to know by unit. For every single unit, at every level, we should be monitoring not only the complaints, but the career progression, the failure rates, the success rates, the recruiting, the pass and fail on courses, and why. Sometimes it's just equipment. Sometimes it's just the way the courses have been designed.

I'm one of these people who believe that physical standards should never be compromised or lowered for any group of people. If the enemy builds six-foot walls, every single soldier should be able to scale six-foot walls, but if we say that all our soldiers need to be five foot seven because we got the lowest bidder on our aircraft and that's the height minimum that we need to have, there's something wrong with that. Legitimate standards have their place, but we need to challenge those.

Mr. Darren Fisher: So, what gets measured gets done.

Ms. Sandra Perron: What gets measured gets done.

The caveat there is that units that don't have any complaints should be red-flagged, in my mind, and units that are getting a lot of complaints should be getting pats on the back and additional training and mentoring.

• (1625)

Mr. Darren Fisher: Kristine, I'd ask you the same question. You talked about your objective as making the military culture more inclusive, a culture of diversity and gender equality. If you were in the seat designing, redesigning or tweaking Operation Honour, what do you do?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: I'm going to reiterate the need for disaggregated data. It's not difficult, but it's in every situation. Whether it's peacekeeping or policing in the military, we're always talking about needing more data. Even in terms of setting targets for more women or more diverse groups, we need to understand who's coming, why they're dropping out and who's going up. Having a mechanism for ensuring that we have that hard data and being able, then, to analyze and understand it would be number one.

Number two, I think one of the big problems is in terms of communication. You can set targets, and you can have big programs, but if they are not well communicated across the organization and you have people who perceive Operation Honour as something that perhaps it's not or who don't understand why we're doing this, then it's not going to advance. I think we need a strong and rigid communication plan for that so that everyone from the top to the bottom really understands why we're doing this and why this is so key and important to changing the culture of the organization, of the military.

The Chair: That ran a bit long, but I wanted to hear what you had to say.

I'm going to yield the floor to MP Martel.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, witnesses, for being here today.

Ms. Perron, I'm very impressed with your journey. That is why I will start with you.

In 1992, you became the first woman in the Canadian Armed Forces to join a combat unit. I find your journey impressive. I'd like to know how many women after you managed to join a combat unit.

Ms. Sandra Perron: There aren't many. Twenty-five years after I obtained my diploma, 0.7% of the members of the infantry, of which I was a part, are women. Progress is slow. Women are moving forward slowly, but there is progress.

Mr. Richard Martel: When women want to join the army, is their first objective to integrate a combat unit?

Ms. Sandra Perron: It depends on the women. Women are probably less familiar with combat arms. The army is used to seeing women in traditional occupations, for instance as nurses, clerks, dieticians or logistics experts. Occasionally, women are encouraged to join a combat unit. People in recruitment centres may have been

told that they have to recruit women into combat units, but their beliefs mean that they are not very much inclined to encourage women to join combat units.

I have not done any research and I may be mistaken, but according to these statistics, 2.9% of the members of combat units are women. It's not even 3%.

• (1630)

Mr. Richard Martel: In the beginning, your objective was to join the Canadian Airborne Regiment. Why did you not manage to get there? Was it because you were not allowed to join it? I don't know why you were stopped.

Ms. Sandra Perron: I don't either. I received a categorical no. It was my dream and I asked to join for several years. I came first in a parachute jumping course, but I was told that women had no place in the Canadian Airborne Regiment.

Mr. Richard Martel: I see nothing in your history that shows that you did not have everything it took to join that regiment.

What do you think about Operation Honour, which includes an obligation to report all misconduct? In his last report, the Auditor General mentioned that some victims are not ready to report an incident or do not want to do so. What do you think of that?

Ms. Sandra Perron: I think that the victim can choose to move at her own pace and decide whether she wants to report the incident or not. I understand that the organization absolutely wants to know about incidents in order to be able to react appropriately, but sometimes a report causes more damage than anything else.

Mr. Richard Martel: Do you think that Operation Honour shows that there is a deep desire to improve things? Do people believe that that operation reflects a deep desire to change the culture? Can you name at least one weak point and one strong point in that operation?

Ms. Sandra Perron: The intention is there. I have always believed that the Canadian Forces wanted to improve things and to see more women in positions of leadership. They know why there must be more women. However, the way they go about it is sometimes awkward and causes more harm than good.

Mr. Richard Martel: Is there a weak point? Where is the biggest improvement needed? Can you tell me?

Ms. Sandra Perron: You can't order people to respect women. If they don't respect their female colleagues, giving orders is not going to change that.

Mr. Richard Martel: What is being done right at this time? Operation Honour does seem to have made a big difference.

Ms. Sandra Perron: It is being talked about.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to MP Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you so much for your excellent presentations. I have a lot of questions and only five minutes.

I'm thinking about your comment, Major Perron, in terms of how we can bring more men along. You didn't ask that question, but that's kind of how I'm.... How do we do it better? I've worked only in male-dominated environments, so I'm very familiar with that changing culture. I guess that's the first part of my question.

The second part, which just came to me, is to what extent, particularly for those who have been in the military for a while—and I'm talking about men—they have a fear that they might have done something in the past and all of a sudden we're asking them to change. It's almost like they actually have to acknowledge that they've done something they shouldn't have done. Also, there's a gradation. There's saying stuff, and there's doing stuff; there's level 1 doing stuff, level 2 doing stuff, and so on. There are different levels. It might have been 30 years ago or 20 years ago. That fear plays in, and it's easier just to say “No, we're not changing” versus accepting that you might not have done something well. That's playing into not changing the culture.

I could be imagining this, but it just struck me as you were talking, as we're having this conversation, that this might be very much a part of it. To what extent do we need to hold someone accountable for something from 20 or 30 years ago? Also, how do we actually provide some sort of space where there's an acknowledgement, but that allows us to move on?

What are your thoughts on that?

•(1635)

Ms. Sandra Perron: I think that's very insightful. There is a fine line between doing something 30 years ago that was rape and doing something 30 years ago that was a really bad joke. We have to recognize that.

We also have to recognize the difference between people who are trying to do the right thing and are just slipping up and others who are resisting women in the workplace. We can tell the difference. In terms of the odd joke, it hurts and it demeans women, but sometimes it is meant to be buddy-buddy. At other times, it is meant to highlight that you're not wanted there. We have to discern the difference between the intentions.

Right now, I sit on a committee with the commissionaires. I'm the only woman. Occasionally they will refer to me as their “diversity”. They will say, “Well, let's ask our diversity.” It's wrong, but they mean well, and they're trying really hard to grow and to think outside the box.

We have to be able to tell the difference. If people come forward with their experience from way back when and recognize that it was wrong, we shouldn't be punishing them, unless it was a criminal offence. We should be rewarding them for recognizing it and growing.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: What would be the recommendation there? It's almost like you need to bring a whole group along. How can we do that? Is there a recommendation around that? If you don't have it now, I would encourage you to try to send something in. That's for both of you.

Again, this has just come to me. It's almost like a truth and reconciliation within, maybe, when you actually do it. You have to

acknowledge it. It's almost like you can pass through the barrier and get to the other side.

Maybe I'll ask my general question. Maybe you're not the right people to ask in terms of how we can bring more men along. You're right—you can't force anyone to change. It's more than just showing them different situations about the light; it's addressing some of the fears that are inside. Maybe that's what we need to do.

What are your thoughts on that? I don't know if you have anything else to add.

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: I agree that you can't force people to come along, but I think there's a very big role to be played by the leadership and by leaders at various levels. For example, there's the sergeant, let's say, who gives a course on diversity and comes in and says, “Oh well, we have to do this.” That's where it should begin, in terms of “We're doing this because it's important.”

If it starts there, I think it's going to go a long way, in addition to changing the training and doing all of that. I think the leadership across the board has to believe in it, first and foremost, and there are still a lot of people who don't believe in it.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I have another question. Before I came here, I was an executive in the financial sector. We talked a lot about mentorship versus sponsorship, and I wanted to get your thoughts on it.

I was thinking, once you get up the ladder, you actually need to be sponsored, because that's what happens for males. You need someone to adopt you, bring you along, and put you into those positions. Mentorship is more for the junior levels. It's kind of mentoring you up in terms of improving your skills.

Do you think that could apply as a model as we try to increase the number of women at more senior levels and bring more women in the military?

The Chair: Sorry, before you answer, I'm going to have to yield the floor to Mr. Bezan.

We will have time. I know Madam Gallant had a follow-up to her question, and I will note that Ms. Dzerowicz has the same.

MP Bezan.

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

I want to thank both of our witnesses for being here today.

Major Perron, I want to thank you for your service. I want to thank you for being that pioneer despite all the hardship that you encountered within the Canadian Armed Forces. You're also a hero to so many young women and men for the role that you've played, so I thank you for that.

I love what you were just saying about making sure we collect the data, because I've always subscribed to the theory that if you don't measure it, you can't manage it. If we are going to properly manage this, we have to have even better datasets than what we have right now.

I know we've been dealing a lot with the wrongdoing that has occurred, the obstacles that have been put in the way of the promotion of women in the armed forces. Let's do the flip side.

You're talking about career advancement, but what attracts women into the armed forces to start with? If we make all the changes—Operation Honour works properly; mentorship is there; we can collect all the information and stamp out sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and intimidation within the armed forces, and the culture essentially does change and we have a better work environment for all—what do we do on the recruitment side to bring young women into the armed forces?

• (1640)

Ms. Sandra Perron: I was going to say, “Good luck with that,” but I’ll reserve my sarcasm for another day.

The thing is, I go into schools every year, and I see that even this young generation is struggling with stereotypes and traditional roles. I play a game with them. I show them photos of men and women, and I make them guess who does what—“Which one is the firefighter?”—and they’re still very much in the old stereotypes. The reason is that they’re getting 30,000 messages a day on the Internet. If you go home and Google “soldier”, “sailor”, “trucker”, “cab driver” or “professor”, you’re going to get men. If you Google “care worker”, “teacher” or “flight attendant”, you’re going to get women.

We have to work at the very lowest level, a young level, to get them minded because that’s the age when they get convinced about some of the opportunities. If you Google “boat”, for example, you’re going to find 800 images of men driving boats. They’re getting programmed at a very young age. One thing we need to do is start very young.

The second one is to include youth, young teenagers, in some of the things we’re doing: invite them to military bases; get women out there to talk to them. I think there are opportunities there.

Let’s not recruit at all-white, male hockey games, because we’re going to keep getting what we always have—and that’s okay, because there’s a certain proportion, but it won’t be diversified, for sure.

Mr. James Bezan: I appreciate that. I know that in Manitoba, where I’m from, they have been doing a women on wings program, and they have women in the aerospace industry, which includes people at 1 Canadian Air Division and 17 Wing, who are out there promoting the forces alongside those who are doing recruiting for Boeing, Magellan and other aerospace industries. They’re starting with kids—toddlers, even. It’s a field day. It’s a great day. Thousands of people show up at it. I agree with you 100%.

I am familiar with your story. I haven’t read your book yet, but I remember when your story first broke, and pictures of you tied to the tree, and the hardship.... That’s brutal, and unfortunately I’ve heard similar stories, happening, of all places, at RMC. You’d think that, with the professors there on top of the civilian bodies, along with the military leadership, that would have been identified and stomped out decades ago. I’ve also heard from people who have gone in to do harassment training within RMC that they get catcalled when they go into the classroom.

You’re talking about our youth, and they’re the ones who should be more conditioned and sensitive than...stuff that happened 30 years ago. Again, does it go right back to our public school system, or is it

society in general and the infiltration of the Internet, and not being able to control everything that’s going on in their lives?

Ms. Sandra Perron: I think some of it is everywhere. If you go to any university, you will find a certain portion of that. Is it worse at MilCol? Studies have shown that it is, or has been, progressively worse than in other areas, and there’s more work to do.

There is a certain reason for that. They are taught to be elite. They are told, over and over again, that they are starting in a pole position, and they’re the best and the cream of the crop. When you get told that enough times, you start believing you are above any reproach, and you start derogating from rules and regulations.

I don’t think it comes from schools, necessarily, or from any particular place. I think it’s perhaps the way we’ve selected them, and then groomed them to believe they are the best.

• (1645)

Mr. James Bezan: Just a....

The Chair: I’m going to have to hold it there, James. You can have time afterwards if you like.

I’m going to give the floor to MP Gerretsen.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Thank you, Ms. Perron and Ms. St-Pierre, for your presence here today.

I want to pick up on the discussion you started with Mr. Bezan—it’s been going on throughout the conversation—about the roles of women, and making more and diverse roles available to women through the manner in which children are exposed to various roles. You were hitting on that just a second ago.

I’m curious as to where you see the line between what the responsibility of society is and what you see as the responsibility of parents. What role do parents play in that, in terms of the way they are nurturing and raising their children? What role does society have to play in trying to affect the way parents do that?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Wow, that’s a—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I’m sorry. I should have started by saying that it’s very deeply culturally embedded, a cultural problem that we have not just in the military, but writ large over everything.

Ms. Sandra Perron: Agreed.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: My two-year-old son watches Paw Patrol. If you don’t know what that is—

Ms. Sandra Perron: I do.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: So you’ll know that, of the seven Paw Patrol characters, only one is a female. The rest are male puppies. At such a very young age, there is already this idea that these fields are male-dominated. But can we blame the people who make these cartoons, or are we already contributing to a norm that has existed and that parents might support? Where does that line come?

Ms. Sandra Perron: I’m not sure about the word “blame”, but I think it’s rampant in society. It’s where we are right now. Things like the #MeToo movement are rapidly giving us awareness of what’s going on.

It's the responsibility of us all, not just the military or the political side of things. It's everybody's responsibility to open their eyes and see the gender stereotyping and to talk to their kids about it, to buy books that are more gender-neutral or have female heroes.

I got a brochure about a week ago from CAA, and it's all pictures of men saving the lives of women who are stuck on the side of the road and can't change a tire. It's offensive to me, but most people would look at it and not think twice. I think we just need awareness about those things.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It starts with organizations such as the CAA in making sure that they're taking the right approach to that.

Earlier, in a reply to a question, you said, "You cannot order soldiers to respect". I really liked that comment, because I totally agree with you. You then went on to use an anecdotal example of a role that a woman might play in Afghanistan that's different from that of a man, in order to highlight the skills that the woman has. Can you give us an example of what kind of role that would be?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Don't get me wrong. Women are fierce warriors, and they can do the role of soldiering and commanding troops. In a country where women have been abused and oppressed and will not talk to men or will not be in a room with men, we can use women platoon commanders to address them, to have conversations with them to build that trust, and to go into villages, as they did in Haiti. They are an intelligence-gathering force that we can use.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: On that line, the last time we had a meeting on this, we had a witness come forward—as the chair said, it was back in the fall, so I can't remember which witness it was—who said not to paint women as though their strength is going to be the maternal instinct that they can have, because all you're doing is putting them in a totally different category and you're continuing to enforce that. How much of that statement do you agree with, and how does that impact what you're saying right now?

• (1650)

Ms. Sandra Perron: This is why I said not to underestimate the power of women to be fierce warriors. We have to create situations where they get to do both, and not just always be the ones we go to when we want them to access a village of abused women. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that every soldier has a specific gift to the unit. We don't want them all to be Rambos. We need the sprinter, and the person who can carry a lot of weight, and the one who speaks a different language or the local language, and the one who navigates really well. We need all these skills in a platoon. Women have certain skills that we can tap into.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: I think what you mean is that women have the ability for all the skills, as do men, because women can be Rambos, too.

Ms. Sandra Perron: Oh, yes.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Okay. That's all I have.

The Chair: I'm going to have to hold you there, Rambo.

The last formal question will be a three-minute question going to MP Blaney, and then I have taken note of a couple of people who wanted some more time. If you want some, just flag me or the clerk and we'll get you on a list.

MP Blaney.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you so much, Chair.

I am really captivated by the idea of an exit interview. I think that's such a great idea. I'm just curious. What are the questions we need to be asking women when we do the exit interview?

Ms. Sandra Perron: What are we doing right? What should we keep doing? What should we stop doing? Why are you leaving?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: You talked about mentoring, and then we had sponsorship added to that. You said that it exists but it's not being used. Can you tell us why it's not being used, and is there any way that we could provide a recommendation on how to encourage the use of it?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Mentorship takes time. To do it really well you have to implement ways of doing it and to formalize it. That takes time. The forces wrote a beautiful book on mentoring—a thick policy book—and they never implemented it. It's ad hoc, a little bit everywhere, and it's left up to the units to do any mentoring they can. Ask any military person, and probably 80% of them will tell you they've never had a mentor or mentored others in a formal way. Why? Corporations do this all the time, and it works.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Do you have any thoughts about how we could...? I understand there is a book that's been written about it that's not being used, but are there recommendations on how to encourage...?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Even though I said you can't tell soldiers to respect their colleagues, you can't force them to, you can certainly force a program like mentoring onto a unit and measure it.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: With better data collection.... Of course, data is always so powerful, and it really allows us to measure. One of the things that were said is that you do better when you can measure it. What do we need to be measuring? I ask both of you.

Ms. Sandra Perron: Let's measure the good stuff too, the success rates of women, the number of women and DGMs who are being mentored, the number of graduations and promotions of these DGMs and representation. Let's measure the good stuff.

Then let's measure the not-so-good stuff. We measure the number of accidents they have or the deaths in a unit. Let's also measure the number of complaints and the number of complaints that were addressed in the correct fashion.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

Do you have anything to add?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: I think it would also be important to measure the ability of women to actually voice their opinions, to speak out. I think there's a specific way in which that could be measured. Certainly that would be quantity—how many come in, how many move up, and things like that—but also qualitatively. What are they able to achieve? What can they contribute? We have to talk about meaningful participation as well—not just that they are present there, but how can they really contribute?

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Given the time we have left on the clock, I have MPs Gallant, Dzerowicz, Bezan and Spengemann who would like more questions. That means we can give everybody here five more minutes each.

I will start with MP Gallant. The floor is yours.

• (1655)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I will pick up where we left off with Ms. Perron. That is, if we had a chance to have the Auditor General in here right now and you could pose questions, what would those questions be?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Why are we not measuring the success of women at every single level, including all the other DGMs as well? I speak mostly about women, but I would add the DGMs in there. Why aren't we doing that?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: One of the aspects of the report dealt with victims and duty to report, and the fact that there really wasn't a lot of support for victims. In fact, what they have told me is that when they have come forward and they have gone through the examination and the rape kit and everything else, they are the ones who are pulled out of the unit and segregated, and their training stops. They are not allowed to talk about what happened; they are not allowed to warn the other women, but they are assured that the other women in the unit are being told. Then they find out subsequently that no one has warned them, so they don't know if this kind of activity has continued because the person hasn't been arrested yet.

Is this the sort of thing you're hearing in the correspondence you receive?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Absolutely. It's not just in correspondence; I have close friends who have gone through it. They have been removed from their unit and put to work in a different section, sometimes in the same building or on the same floor as their aggressor. Those are anecdotes I've heard before from some people who are in my close circle of friends.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Okay.

Given this validation—because I've heard it, but now we're hearing it from witnesses as well—I would like to move a motion that the Auditor General appear before the Commons committee before March 31, 2019 concerning his fall 2018 report 3, “Canada's Fighter Force—National Defence”, and report 5, “Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour—Canadian Armed Forces”, and that his appearance be televised.

We will make sure we give you notice, too, if this motion passes and we're able to have the Auditor General here and pose questions, because he has written to this committee and indicated that he would like to appear and answer our questions.

I have moved the motion.

The Chair: It's a notice of motion.

Mr. James Bezan: No, she moved the motion.

The Chair: The expert opinion from the clerk is that you had a similar motion that was defeated before. This particular motion, given where we are today, can serve as notice of motion, but you can't move it today, given what we're here to talk about.

I accept this as notice of motion, and in the next meeting we can certainly vote on that.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Just on that, Mr. Chair, because the motion is more substantive than the previous motion that was submitted, and it was moved during a discussion that's very germane to the study we're doing right now and the testimony that we just heard, and the AG's report has been mentioned, I believe it is admissible to be moved at this point.

The Chair: I appreciate your opinion, but it is my ruling that it will serve as a notice of motion.

Mr. James Bezan: There's no use challenging the chair at this point because it would just get defeated.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: The motion is in order to be moved right now because it is part of the discussion. We've been discussing the Auditor General's report—

The Chair: No, it's not. Madam Gallant, I've ruled on this. This is going to serve as a notice of motion. I'm happy to take that, and 48 hours from now, which will be at the next meeting, we can have a discussion on whether or not this is going to hit the floor.

Next up for five minutes is MP Dzerowicz.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Great. I have only five minutes. I have too many questions.

I want to go back to my question where I left off. Sponsorship may be at or above a certain level, and mentorship in the lower ranks. When you look at women, would you say that everybody above a lieutenant-colonel should be sponsored? What would be the recommendation there?

Ms. Sandra Perron: It depends on which trade. There are units that have fewer women than others, and those should specifically be targeted for career progression and sponsorship. In the combat arms, anything above major would be open for sponsorship, and in all the other trades, probably lieutenant-colonel and above, senior officers.

• (1700)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: We are so far behind. It's as if society is over here and the military is over there with women in more senior positions—not in all cases, but in some cases. I'm trying to look at what transformational changes we can make. Sponsorship in the upper levels, I think, could be one.

Ms. Sandra Perron: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: The other thing I was thinking of just as we were talking is that in the business world, when a new CEO comes in, they usually put together their own team. It's not 100% their own team, but they move people into position. Then they put in incentives for them to achieve certain objectives. It's financial, but it could also be related to the number of women or visible minorities.

You both talked a lot about how leadership is crucial, and how there's no way we're going to get transformational change without the right leadership. I think you, Ms. St-Pierre, mentioned that a number of leaders, at the different levels, don't necessarily believe in it, at this point. How do we get the right leaders in place? One, is there the same capability for the head of the armed forces to put their key leaders into place? Two, do they provide incentives around the increase in the number of women in the different areas?

Ms. Sandra Perron: No, I wouldn't say anyone is empowered to put their own teams in place. I think, at the very high level, they are pushing their teams to certain areas. At the unit level, they don't have much say on who comes to them to be part of their unit and be leaders in their unit. They are not held accountable for the career progression or the success of their members, and definitely they should be. I agree with you.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Okay.

Do you have anything to add to this?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: I think it could be part of.... Just as in the business world or in any organization in terms of performance management or promotion, they could look at these various commitments and ask, "Were you able to do this or that in terms of commitments to diversity and equality?"—make it part of the leader's accountability.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: I'm a bit of the opposite. I worked in very male-dominated roles. I've adopted a lot of male attributes. In the business world, we provide coaching once you're past a certain level to help figure out some unconscious biases, and also to figure out what some of your weaknesses might be in progressing to a much higher level. Does that exist right now in the military at the senior levels? Do you know?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Some coaching courses are offered to the military, but there's nothing current that I know of that I would say is a standard operating procedure at a certain level. I think it would be brilliant.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: You have a lot of people who, I think, genuinely think that they're okay, but they're not necessarily okay. But you can't see it, so you almost can't blame them because they can't see it. They need someone to shake it up and to say something in front of them. Again, it really has to be at a certain leadership level and above.

My last question is this. I was thinking about benefits of women in the military, and whether we have documented or have data about how having more women in the military actually increased our capacity to do our jobs. Do we have that data? Do we have that documentation? It's beyond just women being able to go into war conflict zones, and other women being more comfortable talking to them. I think we actually expand the overall capacity of our Canadian Armed Forces, but do we have any type of documentation, research, data or anything that might help to articulate that?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: I think that, especially in terms of the United Nations and UN peacekeeping, there has been a lot of research on the value of having women's meaningful voices at the table, whether it's peace processes, negotiation, mediation or peacekeeping operations. I think there is data that we can pull from that.

We talk about critical mass, and I know you talked about that in October. I think having a critical mass, certainly, is quite important in terms of changing that environment and changing that culture, but it also needs to be supported by all these other commitments and that change. The 30% won't just get to that change. There will be more voices to voice opinions, desires and the need for change, but there need to be those structures and policies in place as well.

• (1705)

The Chair: Thanks.

MP Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: I want to get back to the question I asked before. We were talking about mentorship.

When you look at Canada.... There are other countries in the world that have other programs in place, better participation of women, and more diversity within their armed forces.

Ms. St-Pierre, in the work you've been doing, looking at other countries, who should be mentoring Canada? Who has best practices that we should be adopting?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: That is a very good question.

I haven't studied all the countries. I've looked at Australia a little bit and Sweden in terms of diversity and equality. In Australia, they have certainly put some measures in place to improve that. That would be something to look at, but I can't give you specific data on that.

I do believe Canada has a lot of initiatives—even in the women, peace and security agenda, or the Canadian national action plan—where it says that the Canadian military should mentor other countries and should support the capacity-building of other countries. That is great, but again, just as you mention, I think it's also important, before we do that, to look at our own structures and make sure that our house is in order before we go and mentor other countries in terms of diversity and equality.

Mr. James Bezan: I agree.

Major Perron.

Ms. Sandra Perron: I would suggest that Israel is one of the benchmarks in the industry for women serving in combat. We could learn a lot from them. I don't know about other countries—

Mr. James Bezan: They also use the draft, or conscription.

Ms. Sandra Perron: I know. I don't think there is anybody out there who is in the forefront of embracing diversity as much as Canada. We are 25 years in front of the U.S. and many other countries, but there are best practices out there.

I would say that we need to go outside of the military and look at corporations—they've done really well. Some universities are excelling in that area. Why are they excelling and not our military colleges? What makes it so different?

That's my comment.

Mr. James Bezan: You've deployed; you've served. I'm also interested to know, in terms of the obstacles you faced here in Canada, did they decrease or increase when you were deployed? When you were actually standing side by side, shoulder to shoulder, brothers and sisters in arms in theatre, were you treated differently? Were you treated better?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Quite frankly, it depends on the tour. There was progression.

My last tour in Croatia, the three myths around women with regard to physical fitness, group cohesion and operational effectiveness were debunked. My platoon hit three anti-tank mines, and we survived a lot of attacks. We accomplished a lot of missions, and my gender had no impact whatsoever on any of those.

I can't say the same for my first tour. I was locked up in a duty room and not allowed out of the camp. I guess it depends on the leadership, the opportunities and time.

• (1710)

Mr. James Bezan: In some of the coalitions we were in when you were deployed, how were you received by some of our allies?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Again, it depends. A Spanish battalion was a little different from a British battalion, and the Dutch were very welcoming of women. In terms of scale, I saw a range. My presence was polarizing in most situations.

Mr. James Bezan: I appreciate your sharing your experience with us today.

Ms. Sandra Perron: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I have MP Spengemann, and then MP Blaney.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you again for the conversation this afternoon. We're hitting some really fertile ground in terms of transitioning and transforming.

I want to go back to what you both, or one of you, described as the light-bulb conversations and how you pull men into the issue and get them invested. Madam St-Pierre, I think you mentioned in the beginning that this is a moral issue, that it should be about the right to serve in the Canadian Forces.

On other fronts, including the conversation about gender equality and its economic benefit, there's some research that we like to point to. The Royal Bank did some research saying that if we had pay equity tomorrow, we would have a global benefit in excess of \$10 trillion U.S. When you say that to a bunch of investment bankers, all of a sudden the light bulb goes on, but that's not the right way to go at it. As you pointed out, this is instrumentalization.

Can those two streams move in parallel until we reach a breakthrough where men are engaged, and then move them over to the right-spaced paradigm? Should we never use the instrumental dialogue, or is there some other option? The fundamental starting point is that this is Canada, and this is 2019 now. This is a human rights question, in a way, and it should always be anchored as such, but to actually get the breakthroughs and the light bulbs, do we need to mobilize other avenues of starting the conversation?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: You pose a really great question, and with what Major Perron was saying about how you can't force a soldier to respect, those are very hard questions.

The operational effectiveness is not a new thing. The UN has been using it throughout the 2000s to push for gender equality and say, this is why we need more women in UN peacekeeping missions, because they will do this; they will be able to attend to victims of gender-based violence; they will be able to talk to women and be a role model for women in these countries. Many organizations have been using that argument, and part of it is because we're trying to convince people of the value. Just using the human rights argument, or saying that because we're 50% of the population we have a right, is not translating. It's not hard dollars or financial arguments.

In terms of the UN, you see a change. It is moving away from focusing solely on the operational effectiveness, because we've also seen that it's pigeonholing women. Women are being deployed and then being put only in certain positions and not allowed to do the full range of activities.

It's a very delicate situation and it's about understanding the real context of this institution, the CAF, and what they are able to do and how far they can push. You need to be cautious, but you also need to use the measures that you think will bring you to that change.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Major Perron.

Ms. Sandra Perron: I have two points with regard to what you were saying.

The first one is that I think people need to understand that we are recruiting our soldiers from 26% of the population when we recruit mostly white men. That's economic data.

The other point is that I think men hold most of the power when it comes to moving things and propelling change forward. Imagine a classroom where that same sergeant tells everybody that he doesn't want to teach the Operation Honour crap, and a male corporal stands up and says, "Hey, wait a minute. I think this is really important, and I'm all in. I want to hear this. I don't want to just check the box and be inoculated. I really want to learn from this."

That would make a whole lot of difference, rather than the woman in the room saying, "Hey, wait a minute. We need to do this." Men hold the power. They need to be the champions.

• (1715)

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The last question goes to Rachel Blaney.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: I guess the one thing that really stands out for me in the report from the Auditor General is that the timeliness in resolving cases of abuse is very slow. One of the things that you know when the process doesn't work, when it's slow, is that victims don't believe in it anymore. This silences them even more, which means that we continue this cycle that never gets better.

I'm wondering if you could share your thoughts on a couple of things. First, what are the preventatives to women in the force speaking out? Second, why do you think the process right now is so slow?

Ms. Sandra Perron: Again, I'm going to speak only anecdotally because I don't know all of the data.

I know for certain that the process is slow because of language. The process is slow because of a lack of investigators.

I think some of the main reasons women are not coming forward are backlash, the loss of their careers, and the retribution from speaking out—still today. That's what I'm hearing.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

Do you have anything to add, Ms. St-Pierre?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: That's what I've heard as well. I think it's quite similar to the rest of society. There's retribution and backlash, but certainly in the military, where it's very close-knit...

What we've seen in the media, as well, is the loss of career. When you've worked extremely hard within that unit to achieve that career, to have it end like that is quite hard.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Yes. It's a testament to the strength of those women.

That's all I have. Thank you.

The Chair: I did indicate that this was going to be the last question, but we still have some time. A member wanted another question.

Ms. Dzerowicz, the floor is yours.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

I kind of blame it on both of you. You give such wonderful testimony that it's kind of triggering some other things in me.

There was a comment that legitimate standards are good, but we do have to question many of the current ones. It got me thinking that, through time, how we organize our armed forces has changed because we want to win and do well at our objectives. I'm wondering to what extent the very structure of our military right now, the way we've set up to win, is actually stopping us, women, from joining, progressing and changing the culture.

To be honest, when I think of the military, I think, "Oh, my God, it's so regimented. It would be nothing that I would even remotely want to join." It's not from a safety perspective or because I don't think I could. It's just even thinking....

I wonder to what extent we need a new way of organizing ourselves so that we have a new way of winning in the world. It's a different world. We almost have to evolve that whole way of being so that when we're actually thinking about the army, it's different.

It just came to mind, and again, it's the fault of both of you because you have such intelligent answers. I wonder if you could respond to that.

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: You go; I'll talk after.

Ms. Sandra Perron: I don't know about the structure of the army. I think that's been tested and evolved. It needs to be very hierarchical for leadership reasons. I'm not sure I would challenge that.

Certainly, the way women fit in that environment needs to be challenged. I'll give you an example. Women are taught, when they go into the military, to adapt to the way men challenge themselves: the competition, the buddy-buddy relationships, and the "let's take it outside to fight it out and then have a few beers".

Women aren't naturally suited for that. We do things differently. We're very suited to helping each other in different stages of our lives. Then we get into the military and become competitors and our own worst enemies, instead of being mentors to one another. We're not taught, in the military context, to help other women. When I talk to women in the military, it's like a light bulb goes on: "Oh yeah, we can be good to each other. We can promote and encourage." We're not taught that in the military, as women.

• (1720)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: What's the recommendation there?

Ms. Sandra Perron: It's to have that as part of our discussions and just teach women to be better mentors, to be the mentors that we never had.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: To other women....

Ms. Sandra Perron: Yes.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Do you have something to add to that?

Ms. Kristine St-Pierre: I think that when we say we want to bring in more women, more diverse groups, it's not just about bringing them in, but also about recognizing that they're bringing different perspectives and different ways of doing things. It's about being open to challenging the status quo, or the way we're doing things right now, with those new perspectives, and also being open to hearing those new perspectives.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Thank you.

The only comment I would make, Major Perron, is that you're right. I used to train for half marathons, and in my first one I remember there was a guy at the top of the hill. It was at the end of my 17 kilometres, and he's at the top and he's yelling at me, "You can do it! You can do it! Run, run, you can do it." When I got to the top of the hill, I almost killed him. I told him that's the least motivating way to actually get me to the last half kilometre up the hill.

You're right: The way we're motivated is very different.

Thank you.

The Chair: I thank you both for coming and adding value to this important conversation.

The meeting is adjourned.

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