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Chair: Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg



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• (1555)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC)): We'll start the meeting.

[Translation]

Welcome to meeting number 55 of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Today, we are continuing our study on the experience of women veterans.

[English]

We have three witnesses with us today. I'll introduce them in just a few moments, and they'll all get an opportunity to share with us their opening remarks.

Before we get started, I will let people know, as we have in the past during this study—

Mr. Desilets.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Chair, since we started the meeting much later than expected, what time do you expect to finish? I have to leave at 5:45 p.m. to give a speech in the House.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): We will have to end the meeting at 5:30 p.m. because one of the witnesses also has to leave at that time.

[English]

We will be dealing today with some topics that are difficult for our witnesses to share and I know will be difficult for some to hear as well, especially those who may have had similar experiences. I want to let everyone know, our witnesses and anyone else with us today, that we have assistance that is available if you're finding that you need it. Please ask our clerk, and they can make sure that those resources are made available to you. That's a very important thing I think everyone needs to know.

I wanted to make sure that was clear up front. We will get into our meeting, because we have only just a little over an hour and a half at this point because of the late start with votes.

Two of our witnesses are online. I will start with our witness who's here in person. We'll give them each five minutes to give an opening remark, but given that they are providing very personal testimony in some cases, I'm going to be fairly lenient.

Please don't take too much advantage of that time, but I will of course give you the opportunity, because it's important that we make sure that is available to you when you are sharing with us something that is deeply personal and has had big impacts on you.

With that, I will turn to our witnesses. I will introduce all three of them first, and then I'll have them all give their opening remarks.

We have here with us in person Master Corporal Jacqueline Wojcichowsky.

Online, we have retired sergeant Kathleen Mary Ryan and retired major Joanne Seviour.

We will give them each their opportunity for opening remarks.

Apparently, the preference of the committee is to start with those on video conference, so we will start with retired sergeant Kathleen Mary Ryan.

The floor is yours. Just open your microphone, and you can provide some opening remarks to us now.

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan (Sergeant (Retired), As an Individual): Thank you very much for inviting me to partake in this committee.

The big question is, why are we here?

Fifty years ago I marched on Parliament Hill for women's rights. I then joined the Canadian Armed Forces, believing, foolishly, that the government was actually going to do what it said.

Here I am, 50 years later, in a committee meeting where we're discussing women's rights in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I won't take up too much time out of the five minutes. There is a lot more to be said.

I was in the military for 40 years. That could take up four of these meetings.

It starts with change, and it starts with understanding. It starts with both genders coming to the table and understanding what the other expects. I think that's where we have to look at starting.

Thank you.

• (1600)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you very much, Ms. Ryan.

Now we will turn to retired major Joanne Seviour for five minutes or thereabouts, for her opening remarks.

Just open your microphone, and the floor is yours.

Ms. Joanne Seviour (Major (Retired), As an Individual): Thank you. Thank you all. Thank you to the committee for your interest in this issue and for giving me an opportunity to express myself.

Like Kathleen, I also sometimes feel baffled that we're still talking about this topic, but when I reflect on it, I'm not surprised. Like Kathleen, I put on the uniform at 14 and took it off at 50, when I was medically released following an injury in Afghanistan. I was reserve, regular force, back to DND civilian, reserve and regular force; so I had a 33-year career, around 40 if you count Sea Cadets, in uniform.

The class action lawsuit literally opened a Pandora's box for me. Prior to that, I would say I had an incredible career, and I still feel that way. However, I think, to move forward on this issue.... Like Kathleen, I'm more interested in moving forward, but sometimes it's necessary to delve into the challenges and the things that are difficult to hear to find the solutions.

While Canada did an incredible thing in 1989, being the first western nation to open all combat trades to women, it resulted in people like myself, Colonel (Retired) Eleanor Taylor, a friend of mine; and other women like Sergeant Kathleen—I didn't get your last name, so I'll call you Sergeant Kathleen—having incredible careers. I'm not going to say it was easy, but the challenges made me stronger.

I'm interested in answering any questions you might have about my lengthy career that might help us in moving the culture and really identifying this problem for what it was.

The Canadian Armed Forces has a crisis in leadership.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Chair, there's no interpretation.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Sorry, I'll have to interrupt you just for a second, Major Seviour. We appear to be having a problem with our interpretation. It's from English to French. Is that the problem, Luc?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: I think the witness's microphone is too low.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Major Seviour, apparently you need to raise the microphone a little and maybe just say a few words for us.

Ms. Joanne Seviour: Okay. How is that audio? Is that clear?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Is that okay, Luc?

Okay, it seems like it's better, so maybe just go back 15 or 20 seconds before the interruption and start from there.

Ms. Joanne Seviour: You're breaking up in the audio, so I'm not hearing all your words, but my point was that I'm interested in an-

swering any questions you might have with the objective of using this crisis in leadership as an opportunity, because I really feel that when men and women work together, we have complementary skills. While people like myself and Eleanor proved that we were capable of doing the job, and very well, it wasn't without a lot of challenges.

I think it's important to identify those areas where women's voices are literally going to make the armed forces stronger, because we don't often do things in the same way. We lead a little differently. Having grown up in that male culture, I understand their side, but I think it's time to start incorporating and valuing the skills of women leaders.

Thank you for all the work you do. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

• (1605)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you very much, Major Seviour.

Now, for our final witness, here with us in person is Master Corporal Jacqueline Wojcichowsky.

If you want to begin your opening remarks now, just turn your microphone on. The floor is now yours.

Master Corporal Jacqueline Wojcichowsky (As an Individual): Hi. My name is Master Corporal Jacqueline Wojcichowsky, CD. I have 32 years of experience in the Canadian Armed Forces. I have worked in two different trades, as an armoured crewman and now in human resources.

I have held various positions with Lord Strathcona's Horse and also with Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, 1 Military Police Regiment, 3rd Canadian Division headquarters, 6 Intelligence Company as their release clerk now, and numerous other units.

I am here to speak about the disconnect between the military and Veterans Affairs with respect to the trauma of injury and illness in women currently serving and those who are veterans.

I believe there is a lack of female representation at all levels in the VAC organization, but specifically among individual representatives. This makes it especially difficult for female veterans to access the services and entitlements they require, because the male associates who are processing their files do not understand and therefore undervalue the trauma female soldiers have endured.

For example, when a rape victim is raped, they don't understand the trauma they go through.

Do they? Do you? Do I?

I do. I was there. I'm one of them.

The CAF lacks equipment that appropriately fits a woman. We struggle with clothing, rucksacks, helmets and boots that do not come in small enough sizes and are not designed to fit females. It doesn't just take a toll on our bodies. It becomes humiliating when we have to deal with wardrobe malfunctions in front of our male peers.

The constant stress of trying to fit in as a woman in a male's world can have long-lasting psychological effects. We shouldn't have to relive these stressors to gain access to benefits.

Do we? Do I? All the time?

We do.

On multiple occasions, I have witnessed the impact of PTSD as a result of sexual misconduct—like, for example, rape—being written off. I have watched my peers, my friends and my family suffer with insufficient support from VAC due to ignorant gatekeeping.

For example, my sister-in-law has been diagnosed with severe sexual misconduct PTSD and has short-term memory loss. She lives her life out of a daily black book. She served 16 years as a sigs operator and is receiving very little to no support from VAC.

Is that right?

In another example, my friend TC, who is located in B.C., is also suffering from a sexual misconduct PTSD assault. She also applied to VAC and is receiving support for her sexual assault, but the trauma from VAC.... Her mental health was not recognized for the veterans independence program and clothing allowance.

How does this happen? Can you tell me this?

• (1610)

A personal example of not being dealt with in a professional manner was when I was called by a VAC representative when I shouldn't have been. I informed him that I had not called, but I had given permission to an MLA to call on my behalf to discuss my outstanding claim on my lung disease. It was in the system since November 27, 2020, and it was at stage 3.

During this time, he indicated that I should release from my position in the military, though I am an active member and very capable of doing my job. He then hung up and called back. He apologized and retracted his words, but by this time, my PTSD had gone from 1 to 10. I told him I was recording my conversation, and then he repeatedly pushed me that we should call the deputy minister. My PTSD was overloaded, but then he continued to push.

During my service, I was raped, sexually harassed, verbally threatened and emotionally controlled. Due to my trauma, I have lost my self-control. It has had a negative impact on my ability to get promotions. Ongoing sexual harassment has affected my physical and mental health, which was not properly diagnosed until 2018 by OSI and Veterans Affairs.

In my case, the CAF did not do a proper, good job. It was Veterans Affairs that made the correction in this proper diagnosis, but most females are not that fortunate. In my case, what I did to move forward was I did the trial of 3MDR, the assisted memory desensitization reconsolidation, for my health. I require ongoing coun-

selling that has helped me to find the right person. I have found support groups like Soldier On and Survivor Perspectives Consulting Group, and I have worked with sexual misconduct centres and other groups.

Although there are some resources available for women through VAC and various other groups, it's not enough for female veterans. We need female representatives hired in Veterans Affairs to actually make changes from the inside out. Veterans Affairs needs people like me in this position. We need people to have mentors for our new and serving members, as well as veterans. In my spare time I seek out veterans who need help with their paperwork for Veterans Affairs, because people are suffering without knowing their entitlements at all. We should be a resource, and I am a world of information. Women are actually seeking me to help them with the entitlements.

Alongside the requirements to improve the CAF and Veterans Affairs, we are failing our new and serving members and our veterans.

• (1615)

Without further change and the growth to support members, we are failing them even before they complete their service.

Now that I am no longer controlled by the shame, the rape, the sexual harassment, I feel empowered to uplift other women to share their own personal stories and stand up for themselves and be warriors. I am here. I am no longer ashamed. I'm here.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak today.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you very much, and thank you to all of our witnesses.

I will also thank all of you. You were originally scheduled to speak before this committee a few weeks ago, and it was cancelled. Particularly for Master Corporal Wojcichowsky, she had flown from Alberta to Ottawa and then found out the meeting was cancelled. I know it was very difficult for all of you to make the time to come back. We appreciate that you did that and that we're able to have you share your experiences and your expertise and your knowledge with us today. Thank you for that.

I'm going to move to our first round of questioning.

For the witnesses, that consists of six minutes for each party. There will be six minutes for the Conservative Party, then the Liberal Party, then the Bloc Québécois and then the New Democratic Party.

After that first round of questioning, if we feel it's necessary, I may take a small pause and suspend the meeting briefly for the sake of our witnesses. Then, we'll move to our second round of questioning.

We'll start with our first round.

As I mentioned, there will be six minutes per party. The first round goes to the Conservative Party for six minutes, and that will be Mrs. Cathay Wagantall.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Through you, Chair, first of all, retired Sergeant Kathleen Mary Ryan, CD, retired Major Joanne Seviour, and Master Corporal Jacqueline Wojcichowsky, CD, it is an honour to have you here. I can only imagine your bravery in being with us today.

I know you have things on your heart and your mind and experiences that we need to have a realization of—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Pardon me; I'm sorry to interrupt. I'm going to have to stop us really quickly here.

We have bells ringing for a vote in the House now. We could continue with a very short round of questions for each member if we were to sit partially through the bells. However, I would need unanimous consent.

Do I have unanimous consent to, say, sit for the first 15 minutes or so of the bells?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): I will then give each party about a three-minute round.

We can then, hopefully, come back after the bells. That will give us our suspension that we were seeking. It will be a little longer than we planned. Hopefully, we can come back after the bells and finish the meeting.

Ms. Wagantall, you have about two and a half minutes left in your remarks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: I raise a point of order, Mr. Chair.

You said we could come back after the vote, but does anyone really want to go vote in the House? We could all vote from here and save some time, since lot of people are participating virtually in the meeting.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): I'm looking around the room—

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: I'm asking if we can all vote from here, with our phones. It would save us a lot of time.

[*English*]

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I plan to vote here.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): I guess what I would ask....

I see there is a hand over here.

Mr. Desjarlais.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): I want to help motivate the suggestion from our colleague here.

Given the weight and gravity and severity of how important this issue is, and given that we have folks from across our country who are present with us, we have the opportunity to utilize our virtual settings, to maybe go to 25 minutes during that suspension and then have a maximum break of 10 minutes, from the 25th to the 35th minute, and then resume.

• (1620)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Okay, thank you. Give me a moment here. I'll just see where we are with the bells.

All right. What I'll do is give each party a five-minute round. We'll suspend for the last few minutes of the bells. Then, when everyone has completed voting, we'll pick it back up. That will give us a shorter suspension.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): With that, Mrs. Wagantall, you have four and a half minutes remaining.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you so much, Chair.

Thank you, everyone. I think this is the right direction that we should be going.

I would like to ask you each to briefly respond, so that we have a sense of your involvement in wanting to seek change in the military in regard to military sexual trauma.

Can you speak to the experience of women veterans in theatre versus on base here in Canada? When it comes to military sexual trauma, is there a difference?

Jacqueline, we'll maybe start with you, and then Ms. Seviour and Ms. Ryan.

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: Yes, there is a huge difference. I've been overseas. I was approached by a male peer overseas and he tried to sexually assault me.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: In comparison to what's happening here in Canada within the armed forces versus overseas, I sometimes hear, "I was well protected when I was overseas versus at home." Is that...?

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: It varies. On my first tour, I was fine. On the second tour, I wasn't.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Go ahead, Madam Seviour.

Ms. Joanne Seviour: I certainly haven't experienced any difference. In theatre, you're around tour operations. You're very busy. However, having said that, we have a disgraced general, Dan Ménard, who was well known in the Van Doos for his sexual predatory nature. He was convicted when he was home on leave and has been dishonourably discharged.

When you have a general in charge of the mission having affairs with junior corporals under his command, I think that answers the question very clearly that there's plenty of opportunity in theatre, as there was in Canada. I don't see a difference. It depends on the nature of your job. In some of them, you may be more protected, but overall, the culture was [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you very much.

Kathleen.

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: I agree with the previous women who spoke. I find that there is a difference. I was raped in Canada while I was in the reserves, but went on to join the regular force and was deployed overseas.

On one tour, I was fine. I felt very much protected by the soldiers—men—around me. On other tours, I had to be very leery. What I have to point out, though, is that almost at the beginning of any deployment, any mission or any tour, any time we were together as a battalion or brigade, the girls would have a little chit-chat, saying to stay away from this person, and don't be alone with that person and kind of stick with this person.... I thought, "Do the guys have the same warnings? I don't think so," and—

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you.

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: That's fine. There are many sides to this. It's unfortunate that we have such a limited amount of time, because I could speak forever.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] and I know, Jacqueline, that we've had conversations around this. Can changes be made to the manner in which allegations of MST and misconduct are investigated?

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: Yes, I think so. The MPs are not the best way. We need a different investigation group. I know, for example, that there has to be a different way to investigate. I know that for me, in reporting something, there are some really great investigations from the MPs, but sometimes there are not. For reporting something, sometimes they're just kind of like, "Yes, okay. This really did happen?" You get that they don't believe you. I've been through that: Do they really believe me? That's the thing.

• (1625)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: How would you set something up in a way that would mean you would have someone listening to you who you didn't fear was going to challenge you?

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: That's the thing. When you go into somewhere, you want to have somebody who believes. You go into an area and you tell your story. You want somebody to be-

lieve you, because it's their word against yours. I went to an organization: "Hey, this guy raped me. The door opened, they screamed, they saw me naked...." You don't want to have something like that, but when you go to the chain of command, they're like, "Oh, that's Bob." No, it's not Bob. That's not an appropriate manner. You want to be part of your life. This is my life.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: You talked—and I'm sorry, this is quite a while back—about a tiger—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): I'm sorry, Ms. Wagantall. I have to stop you there, unfortunately.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Okay. That's fine.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Now we'll move to Mr. Wilson Miao from the Liberal Party.

You have five minutes.

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for appearing here today. It's not easy to hear such stories, but we want to also see how we can move forward with this and prevent something like this.

I understand what Sergeant Ryan was saying. Fifty years ago, she was here to advocate for women's rights, and right now we're talking about this in our military and for veterans.

Through the chair, I would like to ask all the witnesses who are here today the following question: How can we prevent such sexual misconduct or trauma from happening in the military, and how are we able to move forward, especially with any recommendations that you may suggest?

Maybe we can start with Sergeant Ryan.

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: Thank you.

The million-dollar question is how you stop this trauma from occurring. I think it's education on both sides, but it's awfully hard to pin down a single problem. It seems to be that when deployed, there's almost a sense that the male [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] get a lot freer. Maybe that is the way to say it.

Depending on the group you're going out with [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] need to employ some protection.

I don't know where to begin. The [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): I'm sorry, Miss Ryan, but there seems to be a bit of a challenge with your audio. I'm not sure whether there's much we can do, but you're cutting in and out a bit.

I'm not sure whether our technicians have any suggestions, but it does seem to be a bit of a problem.

Maybe just say a few words right now to see—

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: Sure. I'm hoping that this is going to work. I will say my Internet connection is [*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

Can you hear me okay now?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): We are having just enough challenge with your audio, unfortunately.... I think it's mostly possible for those of us in English to pick it up, but it is a challenge for our interpreters, who cannot interpret, and therefore we are unable to utilize your testimony at this point in time.

We're going to have one of our technicians reach out to you to see if they can correct it so we can give you the opportunity to come back on. Just stay there and someone will reach out to you.

We'll have to move on for the meantime. We'll get that corrected as quickly as we can.

Mr. Miao, do you want to redirect your questions?

Mr. Wilson Miao: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Maybe I can direct the question to Major Seviour.

Before that, Sergeant Ryan, if you have anything you would like to share with the committee, you're welcome to send your comments to the clerk.

Major Seviour, please, if you could....

• (1630)

Ms. Joanne Seviour: Moving forward, I've thought a lot about it, because I think this crisis is an opportunity to move forward in a better way. That's the million-dollar question. We're talking about cultural change.

I'm going to be the honorary Lieutenant-Colonel for a reserve unit, and I was at a meeting of all uniformed members recently. They fell into two categories: men who wanted to explain to me that they had no part of it and men who wanted to tell me that they were the good guys.

I think, me included, we all have to take responsibility for the culture. For those men who said they weren't part of it, it's not true. You cannot spend the amount of time that some of these people spend in the military and not hear demeaning comments, sexualized comments against women, women's voices not being heard.

I was part of the problem too. I didn't speak up because I needed that career. I felt I had something to prove. The harder they pushed me, the more I was determined to demonstrate my capabilities.

All three of us were raped, though, and in my case by the commandant of a school. He's not one of the 13 who have already come out, but am I about to go before...? No. That was so long ago.

What I wanted to see was change, and to see Master Corporal Wojcichowsky, who's clearly way younger... I mean, I put a uniform on in 1979, and to hear that the change.... What can we do? I

think we all have to take responsibility to nip any misogynistic comments in the bud and to raise our women to speak up.

I think, as Canadians, it behooves us to start valuing women's skills, which are softer, which are patience, collaboration and compassion.

I can give you great examples of working with generals who were hard charging, with all the skills we value in the army—strong men—but they didn't solicit co-operation. Anyone who served in the Afghanistan conflict could have predicted the outcome.

Mr. Wilson Miao: Thank you.

Ms. Joanne Seviour: You can't make love and war at the same time, and I think as Canadians we all have to take responsibility for changing the culture.

Mr. Wilson Miao: Thank you, Ms. Seviour.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you.

I'm sorry, Mr. Miao. Your time is up.

We'll move now to Mr. Desilets from the Bloc Québécois for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank our guests for being here and for their service. We are all saddened to hear the meeting will be cut short, unfortunately.

I have an image in mind. Since I've been part of the committee, for three or four years, we heard that 25% of women were raped in the army. Today, we have three of these women before us, which makes 100%. It's very sad.

Ms. Wojcichowsky, the Canadian Armed Forces boasted for months that they invested a lot of money, \$3.7 million if I'm not mistaken, in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, in Quebec, to improve equipment for women in the army. You touched on the subject earlier. Is the equipment you get today, since you are still a soldier, or that your colleagues get, adequate? I'm talking specifically about clothing.

[*English*]

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: So far, for the equipment, we have not received much. It seems as though out east gets all of the equipment first before out west gets anything. We're the last place to get anything.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Why?

[English]

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: Usually it's always out east. It's east to west, and we're the last people to get any new things. A friend of mine dropped me off today. He used to be the chief warrant officer, Chief Warrant Officer (retired) Cuffe, who was ordering all of the equipment and clothing. He would say, "Go to Shiloh," or, "Go to Edmonton or Wainwright," to get them to try the clothing first, because they're the coldest. No, they sent it out east.

• (1635)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: It makes no sense.

Are you still dealing with physical injuries due to equipment that wasn't necessarily adequate when you were in the field?

[English]

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: Yes, we do. I have them all the time. For example, our flak jackets are flat. I'm not trying to be ignorant, but we have flat flak jackets when as women we should have breasted stuff. It's flat. They're all flat. They should be made for our bodies. Stuff should have been properly designed years ago, but it's all flat and it comes apart.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Ms. Seviour and Ms. Ryan, I'll ask you the same question. Are you dealing with physical impacts due to bad equipment the army gave you?

[English]

Ms. Joanne Seviour: If you're asking me, I wouldn't say I could point to any specific physical issue I have due to a lack of equipment and gear, but I will echo Master Corporal Wojcichowsky's comments that in all the time I was in, they never made progress. The straps wouldn't fit on my shoulders. The flak vests don't fit properly.

I used to have a pistol on my hip, and every time I went to the bathroom I was afraid it would fall in the toilet, so I had my own shoulder holster made. It's just that the people in procurement and really in so many areas just don't consider women's issues.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Ms. Ryan, I'm listening.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): There's not enough time left, Mr. Desilets. She can answer you right after the break.

[English]

Ms. Ryan—I'm not using your time, Mr. Desilets—we are going to pause in five or six minutes so we can vote. During that time your audio will be tested to see if it can be fixed. If we are able to do that, and hopefully we will be, then I will give you a couple of minutes to address the last couple of items before we start with our next round of questioning.

[Translation]

Mr. Desilets, you have 35 seconds.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Ms. Wojcichowsky, I have another question for you. Do you think support offered when leaving the Canadian

Armed Forces is enough? Are you actually supported during the transition to civilian life?

[English]

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: Why, I hope so, but right now, as I was just saying to another member here, I don't trust VAC. I have constant migraines. I'm afraid about what's going to happen to my reproductive system because I was raped. What's going to happen? Are the male VAC members going to understand about what happens to me and my reproduction because my internals have been damaged? Will they know what's going to happen to me?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Please excuse me. You are still active in the Armed Forces and I should have phrased my question differently.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you, Mr. Desilets.

[English]

Now we have Mr. Desjarlais from the New Democratic Party for five minutes.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Chair.

I first want to acknowledge the stories shared by each of you today, and of course your service. It's not just the service you've offered Canadians. You're offering a service here as well. I know how hard and difficult that is and how painful it has been, suffering for so long and maybe even suffering in silence. I really appreciate your voice. It means a lot to me as a newer member of Parliament, but also as someone from Edmonton.

Your story in particular, Master Corporal, has really pained me to listen to, but I'm just so proud and grateful that you're a member of our province, you're a member of our city, and you're a member of our country, because it's not without sacrifice that it gets better.

I just wanted to say that it's not for naught. No matter what happens, no matter if this report goes the way it needs to and no matter if these things are not implemented, you're doing something that's going to help people no matter what, even if governments, whether this one or the next, don't do those things. I want you to know that your story will live on in my heart, and hopefully the hearts of every member of this committee, to help us know that we have far more work to do.

As a matter of fact, this is a true failure. You're talking about a failure of our governments, not just the sitting government but governments. We've heard the testimony from members who are with us and who have served for so long, and to hear that this is continuous, and that your experience validates that it's continuing, brings me great sadness, especially coming from a tradition of matriarchy. I come from a small community originally, in the northeast of Alberta, a first nations and Métis community. To hear of women being treated this way, especially women who are warriors, pains me a lot. I know how much more you're worth than this system has allowed you.

I wanted to start with that and to also mention the aspect of cultural change that was spoken to and how important that cultural change needs to be. This isn't just an issue of VAC. It's not just an issue of the Canadian Armed Forces. This is an issue of our culture, of how we prop up hatred in this place and across our country and how it has devastating results. It devastates our sisters, our mothers and our grandmothers. It demeans all Canadians when we allow this kind of treatment to continue. I want to thank you for that.

I also want to speak directly to transition supports.

Sergeant Kate Ryan and Major Seviour, I know that you both, of course, have had to go through this experience. You've had to endure in many ways, I think, the lack of supports that should be necessary for many folks serving. Could you explain to us your experience of transitioning out of military life and back into civilian life, and the kinds of supports that you feel were lacking—or that were there and that worked?

Maybe I'll start with Major Seviour.

• (1640)

Ms. Joanne Seviour: First, I want to acknowledge and to recognize that was probably one of the most heartfelt acknowledgements of service, so thank you, Mr. Desjarlais. That meant a lot to me.

I've been a client of Veterans Affairs for 11 years after an Afghanistan injury, so I've had a lot of dealings with them. On this issue in particular, I'll say for the physical injury, Veterans Affairs has been very helpful, but I almost felt like I was dealing with a private insurer who denies everything the first time in the hope you'll go away. Eventually, my physical.... I'm well serviced by Veterans Affairs in regard to my physical injury.

With regard to the class action, I really want to say something here that's important and that was my experience, and I fear it is the experience of many more women. When the class action was established, the Veterans Affairs policy regarding sexual trauma and the impacts on women's health and women's lives as a result of multiple traumas—not just single-incident injury—was not identified in the veterans care policy. I've been writing the ombudsman on this issue.

When I was diagnosed—I spent six months being diagnosed by a clinical psychologist with female sexual interest disorder, which is a new DSM diagnosis, and with persistent depressive—Veterans Affairs ignored one of them. I spoke to four different people, who said, “Well, we didn't deny it. We just ignored it.” You know, that's kind of insulting to me as a Canadian and as a client—you just ignored it. I asked them to put that in writing, but they wouldn't. The

desk officer laughed, and I said everything in my dealings with Veterans Affairs I have to put in writing, but you're not affording me that same opportunity.

In the ombudsman report, as I suspected—I've been in the government and in the military a long time—their policies weren't updated at the time the government announced the class action. I was right. They sent me the new policies, and in the new policies, they wouldn't accept the clinical psychologist's report. He's a Ph.D. with over 25 years' experience.

They wanted me to go to my GP. She was insulted. She wrote a statement to Veterans Affairs, saying, “Are you aware of the state of health care in Canada? You're asking me to fill out these forms when an expert spent six months evaluating, and you won't accept a clinical psychologist.” I contacted the ombudsman and pleaded with them to change the wording to have clinical psychologists, not only GPs or psychiatrists, approved, and they wouldn't. They said their hands were tied. To me, that is just insane.

• (1645)

Mr. Churence Rogers: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you, we'll have to stop there.

I'm not going to be able to accept a point of order right now. You'll have to hold your point of order until after the votes, because I am going to suspend the meeting.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Okay. That was my point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): If that was your point of order, that's fine.

I wanted to give the witness an opportunity to finish, so we've done that.

Before I suspend the meeting, I'm going to remind our one witness, Sergeant Ryan, that you will be doing some testing of your audio during the suspension. Hopefully, I'll be able to give you an opportunity to address the question you had before we commence our second round.

With that, for about 10 minutes, so everyone can put their vote in, I'm going to suspend the meeting.

The meeting is suspended.

• (1645) _____ (Pause) _____

• (1700)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Members, we'll recommence the meeting now.

We have Sergeant Ryan back with us, and we believe.... Hopefully, the issues have been resolved, at least for the time being. What I am going to do is.... I know she was attempting to answer a question.

If you can recall what the question was, Sergeant Ryan, I will allow you a minute or so now to finish that answer. Hopefully, your connection will remain solid. If that isn't the case at any point in the next half hour or so, we may have to reconsider that. Hopefully, that won't happen. I'll give you that minute now, then we'll have time for the full second round of questions, I believe, before we have to wrap up.

I'll give you the floor now for about a minute, Sergeant Ryan, if you'd like to finish that answer.

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: I'm not exactly sure what question it was. I know there was a question about kit and the fitting of kit. From 1978 to 2004, there simply wasn't kit for women, period—end of story. You either made do or you took the high road. There was no accommodation whatsoever for women—for the way we thought, acted and led. We were an afterthought.

Can you imagine being an afterthought? For me, it was four years. Gee, do you speak up? No. You're used to hiding in the corner, because that was your place. If you dared to venture out, you were quickly hammered back. That's the culture that I and, I'm sure, Lieutenant Commander Seviour, understand. We did it for self-preservation, if nothing else. When you talk about culture and kit issues, well, yes, I've been there and done that. I have far too many T-shirts.

That was one question about kit issues. I can't remember what the other question was, but my minute is probably up.

• (1705)

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Your time has indeed run out.

We now have time to move on to a second round of questions. The Conservative Party and Liberal Party will each get five minutes, and the Bloc Quebecois and New Democratic Party will each get two and half minutes. Then, five more minutes will be granted to both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party.

Ms. Wagantall, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to direct this next question to Master Corporal Jacqueline.

We know it appears that sexual misconduct is on the rise in the Canadian Armed Forces. In the 2018 fiscal year, there were 256 cases reported. That number has risen every single year since then. In the last fiscal year, there were 444.

In DND's most recent departmental plan, there isn't even a determined goal to reduce cases of sexual misconduct. All it says in that column is, "Target to be determined". This says to me that there isn't clarity on how they're going to deal with this issue.

We heard the numbers are larger because people are feeling far more comfortable and safe coming forward now. Would you say that is reflective of the circumstances now? You're still serving. What was the suggestion you had in regard to a means of dealing with that through a target team?

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: I brought up to you, when I first met you, a suggestion to bring in a target team. You bring in a team. Bring in the new people to take out the old, because we have old people who have the belief that women shouldn't be in the army. We bring that in to start weeding out the old, who have the mentality that women shouldn't be in the army. This is old [*Inaudible—Editor*] of the old.

I've been in the army since 1992. Start bringing in a new mentality of, "This is how," because it is what it is. You bring in what we have and start.... Bring it from the top down, because you don't see it. You bring it from the bottom up. We're all working together, but it's this way. You have to bring them together. If you don't bring the top...and bring it forward.... If you have them all together, you can work together.

I hope that makes sense.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: What I'm hearing is that the goal is to change the culture, and to try to change it from the bottom up will not work. Our problems are from the top down.

Is that what I'm hearing?

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: That's correct. Yes, it is.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Okay, thank you.

Joanne Seviour, you talk about how you're focused on building a more inclusive and respectful culture. That's what we all want to see across all of society, let alone specifically in this case, within our armed forces.

When you were speaking and you were talking about your experiences, you said you needed your career. In a way, that was used against you.

How would that change? That's something we need to change, so that you don't have to fear for your career. That's what keeps you silent.

Could you speak to that?

Ms. Joanne Seviour: I think....

Am I breaking up, or do you hear me? Can you hear me clearly?

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Yes.

Ms. Joanne Seviour: I'm sorry. I lost my train of thought. It can be difficult to focus sometimes.

You were asking again about the cultural change and what was necessary.

• (1710)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: On the one hand, you want to see a more inclusive and respectful culture, which everyone would say is the goal, yet when you talk about your actual life experience, which was in the service—and that would be reflected even today—we're seeing that's still happening. You commented that you needed your career and that was what held you back from exposing those circumstances.

How do we deal with that?

Ms. Joanne Seviour: The Minister of Defence has committed to following all the recommendations of Justice Arbour's report, but it's a bigger issue. They've taken it out of the military justice system for assaults. Those sent to the civilian police forces...they don't have the capacity to deal with it.

They're very complicated investigations when it comes to sexual assault. I needed my career because my father died prematurely. I needed the money. I was smart enough to recognize that any sign of weakness is capitalized on, so I wasn't going to let them see me.... I never commented on this for 30 years, until the class action sent me a bunch of paperwork and asked me to fill it out.

Needing a career is.... I needed the money, and I had something to prove: that I was capable and I was smart.

When I go to the reunion with General Hillier's staff in Ottawa in the fall, they will be shocked if they ask me, and I ask them directly, because nobody has heard these stories.

I don't know what to say.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you for that.

We'll have to move now to the next questioner.

Ms. Rechie Valdez from the Liberal party, you have five minutes.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses who have joined us for our committee. I appreciate your service and sacrifice for our country and, in particular, your honesty today. I recognize that sharing your stories is not easy. To each of you, your testimony is powerful, strong and necessary for change, which is what you're asking for.

Through you, Mr. Chair, I'll direct my first set of questions to Sergeant Kathleen Mary Ryan.

We received your brief. I have some questions. I reviewed the brief, and there are a couple of things that I want to clarify.

You mentioned you've seen improvements in the professional and economic aspects for women veterans. Can you elaborate on what you are referring to?

There were two main points that you covered. One was related to career training and planning, and the second was financial benefits.

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: When I first joined, we made less than 50% of what our male counterparts made. When I first joined

the reserves, I made \$19 a day. When I retired, that was totally different.

Things have changed. Some things have improved. There are two things. One is the level of education that is required to be in my job as a medical technician and air evac. There is a level of intelligence that is needed to do the jobs and the tasks within that job. They train you to do that. There is an expectation that you are going to achieve that level of expertise in, say, air evac.

At one time, you didn't have women in air positions and you didn't have women on the ships. Women were background. We were in the back lines. We weren't spoken of; we were spoken to.

What was your other question?

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: It's the financial benefits.

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: Yes, of course, the financial benefits go along with that. You progress in rank and you progress in pay. You progress in specialization, and it's called "spec pay": You get more more pay. There are more opportunities open for women. I believe that now they are across the board. Women can serve on ships. They can serve in air. Maybe submarines...that might be the only one women can't serve on.

The benefits are there. They now make....

Now, as the Master Corporal said, no, I have not been into Afghanistan, so I don't know about the flak jacket issue. I know that the one I received was—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): I'm sorry, Sergeant Ryan. We have more bells for another vote.

However, I note that we have only about 15 minutes or so remaining in our meeting anyway. Do I have unanimous consent to finish the meeting at 5:30?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Vice-Chair: Okay.

Continue, Sergeant Ryan.

• (1715)

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: There have been changes. There have been improvements, but when I look back over the years at how long it took to get those changes, now that we have those changes, are they still looking at how they can improve those changes or are they just going, "Yes, we did it. That's it. It's over with. We have clothing for women"? It comes down to, as every other member has mentioned, culture: It's a culture.

Have we gone to countries like Germany, England and France and asked them what their sexual assault rate is? Have we asked them what their policies are and how they handle it? I mean, we certainly cannot be the only people in NATO who have this problem, and if we are, well, we're not as good a country as I thought we were. That's something that needs to be looked at.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: Thank you.

You also mentioned that you had a dedicated case manager who followed up with you on a regular basis today....

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: Yes.

Mrs. Rechie Valdez: I just wanted to hear, from the time that you were released from the centre and with support units being assigned to the case manager now, what was that time frame? Could you share that?

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: I was posted to what was then the JPSU, I think, in 2015, and I didn't release until 2019. In that time period, they offered me retraining—"re-coursing"—and they would offer me, "What do you expect to do in two years or three years or however...?" As it turned out, I ended up having metastatic breast cancer, and that put everything on hold.

I released in 2019, I think relatively smoothly, but we had a huge hiccup with our.... We lived in PMQs and we asked for an extension to live in PMQs while we got this sorted out, with the cancer and everything, and the housing manager said no. I had a meeting with him. We took it to harassment. That's what I had to go through with my wife.

I served the military. I served the people of Canada for 40 years. Does that not count for extending my PMQ for however long I need to?

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you.

We will now move on to the next round with the Bloc Quebecois.

Mr. Desilets, you have the floor for two and half minutes.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you.

Ms. Wojcichowsky, you are still part of the Armed Forces. Would you say that, over the last five or six years, the culture has changed within the army? Has it improved?

[English]

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: I could say that it has improved some. With the sexual misconduct, it's slowly improving, but I still think that there is a lot to improve. I did a speech at 3 Division headquarters in December.

I think there still needs to be more. I was supposed to be doing more across Canada about my experience of sexual misconduct.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: If I understand correctly, you're saying that the culture in the army is maybe a little more inclusive when it comes to women.

[English]

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: Can you...?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Do you see a difference between the place women have in the army today, compared to 5 or 10 years ago? Is the army more inclusive? Do the men accept you more?

[English]

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: When I was an armour crewman, they accepted me back then, in the early 1990s. In the early 1990s they loved me, because they saw me as one of the men. I did exactly what they did. I did everything even back then.

Even now, they accept us as who we are. They accept us.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: I will ask you a question that may seem strange to you. Currently, in the army, are you yourself, or do you have to adapt your behaviour to the demands of the men?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): You'll have to keep your response fairly brief, if that's okay.

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: They treat us very well, and they expect us to be us.

[Translation]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you, Mr. Desilets.

[English]

We now have the New Democratic Party for two and a half minutes.

Mr. Desjarlais, go ahead.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I want to extend my thanks to all of my colleagues around this table. I sit on many committees and it's not often I see such good questions and thoughtful participation in what I think is a very important issue. I want to thank the chair and all of my colleagues, since this will be my final participation in this committee. It's been a pleasure working with all of you, and I hope you continue this good work and continue to value the lives of those who serve Canada.

I'll go directly to one of my questions, which will be directed to Sergeant Ryan.

Sergeant Ryan, you spoke about your participation as a medical technician and, of course, it comes to mind that, as a woman in the Canadian Armed Forces, serving as a medical technician, dealing with the issues of women's health could present a particularly interesting barrier to your practice, considering there hasn't been much attention or appetite to see many of the concerns of women's health actually addressed, and especially in light of the testimony given today.

Are CAF medics given the resources and tools they need to properly care for women in the military? I'm thinking more along the lines of having the appropriate tools—like a rape kit, for example—or the various tools that make your profession easier.

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: Absolutely. In every clinic, every deployed operation, you will find a rape kit. It's standard issue. The medics are trained in Borden.

If a woman says to me, "I've been raped," the first thing I do is get the nurse in charge and call the MPs, because there is a process that has to be followed. We're very well trained in that, and I have no complaints about that.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Did you find that the Canadian Armed Forces was able to supply you with the appropriate resources and tools to help those victims in that case?

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: Today it is, but it wasn't back when I first joined.

There have been important changes in the Canadian Forces health system.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Thank you very much for that.

I know, Sergeant Ryan, that you weren't able to answer this question in my previous round. It was about your experience with transition and how that experience was for you when you exited the Canadian Armed Forces and had to deal with VAC, for example.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): You'll have to keep the response very brief, please.

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: It was stressful. There's no doubt. You're not ready for civvy street after 40 years in the military.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you for that. That was, in fact, quite brief.

Now we have just enough time, I think, for one more round of questioning each for the Conservatives and the Liberals. I think it will be about three and a half minutes each.

I will go first to the Conservative Party for three and a half minutes.

Mrs. Wagantall, go ahead.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Thank you, Chair.

I thank you all for your contributions today. We will go back and review this, and I believe it will make a difference in our report, so thank you.

Major Seviour, you talked about when the class action lawsuit came into being and this issue around VAC policy and there being nothing there for MST. You went through this experience personally of having a clinical psychiatrist report that wasn't accepted and

an expectation that you would go to your GP. You said VAC said they couldn't deal with that and you should go back to get a sensible report because their hands were tied.

Can you explain that, please?

Ms. Joanne Seviour: I contacted the ombudsman's office. It was the ombudsman's office who shared with me the new policy that didn't mention clinical psychologists. They said they weren't able to change it. It wasn't within the ombudsman's purview. It's for Veterans Affairs to do that.

If you do nothing else but recommend that the reports of clinical psychologists, who are Ph.D. experts in the field, at least be included for female sexual interest disorder and issues related to female sexual trauma, then that would make a difference. It would mean something to me. I think it's important.

Our health care system is in crisis. Physicians don't have time to be filling out paperwork.

• (1725)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Would you say that it's not just the filling out of paperwork, but it's actually being the expert dealing with someone who is in a very serious mental health condition?

Ms. Joanne Seviour: I've been trying for over two and a half years to get services from Veterans Affairs on this issue, with no success to date.

My GP wrote a scathing letter, telling them they were ridiculous not to acknowledge my doctor's report. That has gone to Veterans Affairs. I don't know how long that will take.

We're coming on to the three-year mark now, and I have not been able to access any services for my issue.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: I need you to say that again. You've had no services for three years.

Ms. Joanne Seviour: I've had no services, no access to services, for the trauma experienced when the class action lawsuit opened Pandora's box for me.

I have been trying with Veterans Affairs over a long time.... I don't know what to say. I have no influence. I've tried everything I could, and they'll say....

You have to wait a long time to get in to see a specialist. I just mailed the report the other day from my GP, and we'll see what happens.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: We will do our part here to make sure that recommendation is placed high on our priority list within this report. I'm speaking for the analysts now.

Thank you so much for that.

That was very revealing and very disturbing. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you, Mrs. Wagantall, and thank you, Major Seviour.

We have time for one last round of questions. That will come from the Liberal Party, with Mr. Churence Rogers.

You have about three minutes.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thank you, Chair.

I thank the witnesses for being here today with us, on video or in person.

In the interests of time, I'll ask one question. I'd like for all three of you to make a comment on it, maybe for around a minute each.

What would be your top recommendations that you would want to see in our study report? When we conclude this study and present it to our department, what would be your top recommendations?

We'll start with Master Corporal Jacqueline and then we'll go to the other two for comments, please, for about a minute each.

MCpl Jacqueline Wojcichowsky: For us, it's on sexual misconduct for rape victims. I would like to see change for when there's trauma and PTSD for women.

We're having vaginal problems. Instead of us going through...that needs to be changed.

There are changes. Our bodies are changing. That's emotional trauma for us. We don't know what's happened to our bodies after we've been raped. That totally needs to be changed.

A male who is doing an investigation on our file doesn't know. How does he know? When he looks at the paper: "Oh, it's a female. Meh." That goes against us right away. He needs to know what happens to our body, or "she" might know better than a male.

I know for a fact, when they saw my paperwork, they automatically.... My PTSD was already at 53%. Veterans Affairs said, "You already have it." That's not fair, because they didn't bother going through all my paperwork.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thank you very much.

If there are other things you have on your mind, we'd appreciate it if you'd send them to the clerk for the committee to consider.

Sergeant Ryan, do you want to comment on that question?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): We have only a little under a minute.

For anyone remaining, you'll have to keep the answer brief.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Could you split your time?

Ms. Kathleen Mary Ryan: The most important thing I've seen over my 40 years is that men and women in the higher-up positions need to come together and force the dissemination of that information down to the junior ranks. They have to lead by example, not lead by, "Oh, I'll speak out of one side of my mouth."

• (1730)

Mr. Churence Rogers: Okay. Thank you.

Go ahead, Major Seviour.

Ms. Joanne Seviour: I think the biggest thing is the Veterans Affairs policy that Master Corporal Wojcichowsky referred to. They don't have sufficient policies to deal with trauma that was perpetrated over years and decades, and the impact of that on mental health. I think that needs to be reviewed for women veterans at VAC.

Mr. Churence Rogers: Thanks to all three of you for those comments.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Thank you very much. That's a great way to close the meeting off.

There are so many things to thank all three of our witnesses for.

First and foremost, of course, thanks for your service to our country. We all thank you for that. All Canadians thank you for that.

Secondly, thanks for your indulgence. You had your meeting rescheduled from May 11, I believe, originally, until today. That's particularly for you, Master Corporal Wojcichowsky—for having to fly twice to Ottawa for one meeting. We thank you for your indulgence of that, of course, and we thank all of you for indulging the votes and interruptions that happened today. That kind of thing happens here in Ottawa frequently, especially at this time of year. I know we're used to it, but you're not. Thank you for your indulgence on those interruptions.

I think we've been able to have a very productive meeting, and we've all learned a lot. That's the last thing we want to thank you for: the great contributions you've made to this study, to this committee and to the report we will write.

Thank you, all.

With that, we will close the meeting.

The meeting is adjourned.

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