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Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs

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• (1625)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.)): I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 69 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

For the first hour, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, March 9, 2023, the committee is resuming its study of the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person in the room and remotely by using the Zoom application.

Although the room is equipped with a sound system that performs well, it is possible that audio feedback will occur, which can be extremely harmful to the interpreters and cause serious hearing injuries. So I would ask all the witnesses and committee members to avoid putting their earpieces too close to the mike, which can cause interference, which in turn can hurt our interpreters. So you must pay close attention.

As a reminder, all comments should be addressed through the chair.

Lastly, pursuant to our routine motion, the connection tests were correctly done before the meeting.

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to our witnesses today.

Testifying as an individual, we have François Le Moine, lawyer, and Francyne Lord, public art consultant. By videoconference, we have, from the Canada Research Chair in Architecture, Competitions and Mediations of Excellence, Jean-Pierre Chupin, full professor from the Université de Montréal. From Team Daoust, we have Renée Daoust, founding partner, architect and urbanist, and Luca Fortin, artist and architect.

Allow me as well to welcome some new members who will be taking part in the meeting with us today. We have with us Mr. Boulerice, who is replacing Rachel Blaney, and Mr. Paul-Hus, who is replacing Fraser Tolmie.

I also have my cards so I can inform you when you have one minute left. When I raise the red card, it's like in soccer, you have to stop because you are time is up.

We also have opening statements, and I would like Team Daoust to speak first. Since there are two of you, you may share the first five minutes.

Ms. Daoust and Mr. Fortin, the floor is yours.

Ms. Renée Daoust (Founding Partner, Architect, Urbanist, Team Daoust): Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Renée Daoust. I am an architect and urbanist and am responsible for Team Daoust, which consists of Daoust Lestage Lizotte Stecker, Luca Fortin and Louise Arbour. We are the winning team of the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan competition, the team that was selected by the jury and the only one that should prevail here.

Thank you for this opportunity to finally make our voices heard and to condemn the egregious lack of ethics associated with the organization of this international-level Canadian competition. We have never witnessed a similar situation in our 35-year career.

Today I would like to discuss an undemocratic and unfair process, one that was unjust for the veterans and civilians who took part in Canada's mission in Afghanistan. How ironic it is that the government has involved all those military members who were mobilized and sent to defend and establish democracy in Afghanistan in the worst undemocratic process in the history of competitions in Canada. Although the process was a disgrace for our Canadian veterans—whom you instrumentalized by linking them to a sham survey conducted under obscure rules—those veterans were motivated by four major military values, including integrity.

The process was also unfair for the jury. Remember that four of the seven jury members, the majority, were associated with the mission in Afghanistan and its history. The voice of the Afghanistan experts was heard. It was carried by a veteran, a National Memorial Cross Mother, a former ambassador and a historian. The jury performed meticulous work, consulted the technical reports and the results of the sham survey and confirmed that our team was the winner.

You failed to act on the jury's recommendation, thus causing a major breach of contract and waste of public funds. That situation has created a dangerous precedent in the development of public art and architecture in Canada and the management of requests for proposals in general.

We are particularly confused by the way this unfair process, which undermines our democratic traditions, has been endorsed by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Capital Commission. Is this ethically tainted cultural legacy really what we want to promote nationally and internationally and for future generations?

Out of respect for the memory of our veterans, on November 11, the government should make amends, abide by its own ground rules and uphold the democratic process that is fundamental to the history of competitions in Canada.

Thank you.

Mr. Luca Fortin (Artist and Architect, Team Daoust): My name is Luca Fortin. I am here as a proud member of Team Daoust, and as the voice of future generations and of an entire community in the cultural and creative sectors concerned about the value that the government attaches to our work, which represents a heritage of the future.

Allow me to reestablish some important facts. The contract documents are clear about the role of the Department of Canadian Heritage. They state that the department is responsible for the design competition and for overall management of the monument project on behalf of Veterans Affairs Canada. The Department of Canadian Heritage cannot shirk its responsibility. The survey, which under the initial rules was to be accompanied by a public consultation, was supposed to provide food for thought for the jury. That's what it did, but it was not supposed to invalidate the jury's selection.

On June 19 last, we were met barely two hours before the official announcement of the selected concept and told that we had won the competition but that the contract would be awarded to another team. We immediately expressed in writing, and reiterated on three occasions, our fervent disagreement with that unfair and unreasonable decision.

We also sought meetings with the two ministers, but without success. On September 15, we sent a letter to the Prime Minister requesting that his government correct its error and act on the jury's decision. We received only an acknowledgement of receipt.

Given this state of affairs, and considering the importance of this matter, we mobilized the key players concerned by this dangerous precedent. We are not just the voice of a team; we also convey the indignation of more than 2,000 stakeholders associated to various degrees with the issue of public art, design and architecture competitions in Canada. Universities across the country have condemned your undemocratic process, artists have submitted a petition, and many letters have also been sent to the ministers concerned.

In closing, the Department of Canadian Heritage must accept its full responsibility in this matter, abide by its own rules and so honour the values that Canada holds dear: respect for democracy, respect for persons, integrity and excellence. While there is still time,

the government must prevent the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan from being forever tainted by one of the greatest, if not the greatest, controversies in the history of our country's competitions.

• (1630)

The Chair: Thanks to both representatives of Team Daoust.

I would now like to invite Jean-Pierre Chupin to take the floor for five minutes.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin (Full Professor, Université de Montréal, Canada Research Chair in Architecture, Competitions and Mediations of Excellence): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Jean-Pierre Chupin. I am a university architect and holder of the Canada Research Chair in Architecture, Competitions and Mediations of Excellence at the Université de Montréal. I would like to point out that I am speaking as an individual based on my expertise in competition jury practices in built environment fields.

I have been documenting competitions in Canada for more than 20 years. I established the Canadian Competitions Catalogue, an online resource documenting nearly 500 competitions and more than 6,000 architectural, landscape and urban design competitions organized since Confederation. This bilingual library, which is consulted by more than 3,000 users from around the world every month, is supported by the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

I have helped establish an international research network on competitions and have published reference works in the field. I have also sat on the advisory committees for museums and governments. As an adviser to Public Services and Procurement Canada and the Parliamentary Precinct, in Ottawa, I would like to remind you today that many civic and government buildings have been subject to major competitions, starting with the Canadian Parliament in 1858. In addition to that were competitions for the legislative buildings in Ontario in 1880, British Columbia in 1892, Saskatchewan in 1907 and Manitoba in 1913, not to mention the competition for the Canadian national Vimy memorial in 1921, which was one of the symbolically most important in the history of Canada.

The government sought my expertise in the international competition for the block 2 redevelopment of Parliament Hill, which was adjudicated in 2022. The building will house your offices for the next decade. That was the best organized competition I have ever observed, with outstanding representation of Canadians in a large composite jury.

As an academic who assists in training future generations of professionals, I am extremely concerned about breaches of democratic practices that characterized the way the judgment that was reached in the competition for the monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan was invalidated. All the studies show that, in judging the complexity of highly symbolic and civically important projects, such as public buildings and monuments, a popular vote will never be as reliable, fair or transparent a procedure as a well-organized competition procedure. A competition jury is analogous to a court jury. It represents the diverse range of public interests and works in a rigorous manner.

The jury in the national monument competition was properly constituted with representative members of all interests and informed of the many issues at stake. It debated all the proposals at length and reached a consensual judgment on behalf of the collective interest. I did not observe the jury, and, in fact, very few people, not to say no one, had access to the jury's report, which moreover is highly problematical. However, the fact that the government announced to the top team that they had in fact won the competition means that the jury functioned properly.

Now if it became a normative public procurement practice to invalidate competitions or requests for qualitative proposals and to replace them with online voting, no professional would agree to allow his or her proposals to be subjected to anonymous clicks made based on a few images published on a website. You can actually draw an analogy here. What would you say if a criminal court judgment were replaced by an online vote to determine the guilty party? You'd say that was tantamount to a revolting public lynching and the denial of democratic institutions and mechanisms.

I believe I can attest to the concerns of the public procurement representatives with whom I regularly work and who are awaiting your decision to know whether design jury practices will be permanently compromised in future federal and provincial public contracts. The government has a duty to conduct itself in an exemplary manner in all its proceedings and to honour its commitments.

I also believe I can testify on behalf of future professionals and students to whom my colleagues and I speak every day and who constitute a generation of young Canadians who are highly sensitive to ethical and social justice issues. How will we explain to them that, to ensure fairness, a government can establish judging procedures that are representative of all interests and then decide to flout those rules?

In conclusion, in the situation before us, we have reached a turning point in the history of competitions in Canada. Please allow me to appeal to your judgment as parliamentarians: it is important that the jury report be distributed as widely as possible and absolutely essential that the result of this competition be determined in the name of democracy and ethics.

• (1635)

Thank you,

The Chair: Thank you for your remarks, professor.

For the third and final intervention, I invite Francyne Lord and François Le Moine to take the floor. You will be able to share the next five minutes.

The floor is yours.

Ms. Francyne Lord (Public Art Consultant, As an Individual): My name is Francyne Lord, and I am an art expert. I managed the Bureau d'art public of the City of Montréal for 26 years. I am the secretary of the Commission permanente de l'art public of Culture Montréal and a member of the Comité consultatif en reconnaissance de Montréal, which is responsible for providing opinions on material commemoration projects.

I am testifying before you as an individual with the conviction that my experience can shed some light on the process under way. I have conducted more than 75 public art competitions, many of which were commemorative in nature.

Out of a concern for fairness and to prevent arbitrary choices, the City of Montreal brought in outside experts with recognized experience to select artworks. In all the years I worked there, no jury decision in any City of Montreal competition was ever, at any time, questioned by authorities, who were aware that the process and rules were founded on best practices.

Unlike an artwork destined for a museum collection, public artworks raise other issues. What added value does public art provide for an urban landscape? How does it attest to current creative work and help build a future artistic heritage?

The evaluation of a memorial project such as this one is more complex than any other public art project. Many factors are taken into consideration by the jury, which will pay particular attention, for example, to the way the artist treats the weight of memory and remains sensitive to the pain of the community concerned. In its work, however, the jury also takes into account the moment when the work enters history, since a monument always conveys the values of its time.

Does a citizen responding to a survey judge all that based on 10 lines of text and a few images. Can that citizen analyze all the considerations that have guided the jury's choice?

In conclusion, I want to draw your attention to the consequences of the decision made by the Department of Veterans Affairs to disregard the jury's recommendation. Such a decision undermines the government's credibility with regard to public art. It also leaves traces. It undermines trust in the governance of the highest institution in the country, from which we should expect exemplary practices.

Thank you.

• (1640)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. François Le Moine (Lawyer, As an Individual): Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for this invitation to appear before you.

My name is François Le Moine, and I am a lawyer specializing in art law and president of the Association littéraire et artistique internationale for Canada; I teach art and cultural heritage law at the Université de Montréal, and I am co-chair of Montreal's Commission permanente de l'art public de Culture.

I am appearing as an individual with no partisan agenda. I simply want to state, together with Jean-Pierre Chupin and Francyne Lord, first, the fact that the jury competition system is the best guarantee of high-quality public art for future generations, and, second, the reasons why the government was in fact bound by the rules that it itself had established.

I have submitted a document entitled, "Design Competition—Request for Proposals, Competition Requirements". The competition rules state on page 10 that the jury is responsible for "selecting the winning design, based on the combined scores of the jury and technical committee evaluations." It also states on page 2 of that document that the contract will be awarded to the winning team.

Under the rules of this competition, the government simply did not have the necessary leeway to award the contract to a team that had not been selected. It is the jury that makes the decision, not a minister.

If the withdrawal from Afghanistan altered the situation to the point where the competition was no longer suitable for the purpose of honouring our veterans, the only solution available to the government was to cancel the competition and organize another.

The composition of the jury has already been discussed. That composition shows that all the necessary competencies were at the table for the jury to make an informed decision. The jury also took into consideration the consultation conducted of the Department of Veterans Affairs, which had a legitimate place within the process. That is doubtless the reason why no scientific survey was organized, because that inquiry was done for advisory, not decision-making reasons.

In addition to being the party that was supposed to make the decision based on established practices and competition rules, the jury was representative of the mission and had the time to assess all the relevant factors.

Its decision was disregarded.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Lord and Mr. Le Moine.

We will now go to the first round of questions. Each member will have six minutes of speaking time.

I invite Pierre Paul-Hus to take the floor for the first six minutes.

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

Good afternoon, everyone.

In the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan project, the selection of a team other than the winning team constitutes a dangerous precedent for major federal government procurement contracts. We're used to seeing this kind of thing, but this contract is different because it concerns the arts. Certain individuals

may feel less concerned as a result of that. People often go through their daily lives without feeling that concerned about artistic design projects. Getting back to the process, however, this is becoming a major issue for the parliamentarians around this table.

My first question is for Ms. Daoust or Mr. Fortin.

I'd like to know how you felt on June 19 when you were informed that you had been selected by the jury but that the contract would unfortunately be going to another team.

Ms. Renée Daoust: I must say I was completely surprised.

As I mentioned, in my 35-year career, we have been involved in federal government competitions but have never seen this. We obviously felt we had been wronged. I would say we were disappointed and felt betrayed. After the fact, we really felt outraged—

The Chair: I apologize for interrupting.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: That's the bell ringing.

The Chair: Yes, that's what I thought.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Excuse me, Mr. Chair. I believe the bells are ringing.

I do apologize for cutting off the witness. I just wanted to bring that to the attention of the chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Just a moment. I will stop the clock.

It's true that I saw the lights flashing in the room.

I believe we are being summoned to vote in the House.

• (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May: I believe it's....

I'm sorry. I'm just getting a note here.

I believe it's a quorum call, so we might be in the clear here.

The Chair: Excuse me?

Mr. Bryan May: I believe it's a quorum call, so we might be okay.

The Chair: Okay, so now it's over.

Mr. Bryan May: It looks like it has stopped.

I'm sorry. I offer my apologies.

The Chair: No, no, that's okay. We have to follow the rules in the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Ms. Daoust. I stopped the clock, and you may now continue.

Ms. Renée Daoust: We felt disappointed, hurt and outraged that the highest authority in Canada had acted that way.

We thought it was a total injustice. We're very concerned about the federal government's willingness to discredit a democratic process. The fact remains that these are important competitions.

Mr. Paul-Hus, you said it was about public art. That's true. However, it isn't just about that. It's about public part, architecture, the awarding of mandates and the awarding of contracts. It goes further than just the framework for public art and architecture.

At the very least, we're dismayed to see the government legitimize an undemocratic process, which, in a way, constitutes deceit. We really consider that appalling.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Ms. Daoust.

I will continue in the same vein and put my question to Mr. Chupin.

You mentioned in your statement that you had a working relationship with Public Services and Procurement Canada. Ms. Daoust just mentioned that the process involves deceit.

I'd like to hear your opinion as an expert on the process. I know you clearly explained it, but, in a nutshell, what impact does this decision have on the procurement system in Canada?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: Without wanting to dramatize, I'm not sure there was deceit, but I am sure this amounts to interference. It's interference because the government replaced a well-established procedure that, for your information, has been around for thousands of years. Yes, competitions have been organized for thousands of years. This was a well-established procedure the result of which was cancelled and replaced with a voting procedure. As far as I know, this is unprecedented.

I have checked it with my international colleagues, who have been questioning me on the subject for some time now. They ask me what the point is of replacing an expert jury decision with a vote. We haven't found a precedent, at least not in the advanced democracies.

I've been working with Public Services and Procurement Canada and the Parliamentary Precinct for five or six years. I obviously can't speak on their behalf, but I can attest to the fact that the concern is there. I think this will really disrupt people's understanding as to whether the rigorous manner in which these contracts are awarded should be maintained.

There will be disruption. There will be consequences for contract culture. This is a historic precedent.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Thank you, Mr. Chupin.

In an interview this morning, Louise Arbour, former judge of the Supreme Court of Canada, said that this decision was outrageous and called for the decision to be reversed to protect the integrity of the procurement process.

Mr. Le Moine, as a specialist lawyer, what can you tell me about the remarks made by Ms. Arbour, a former Supreme Court judge and an authority known to all of us here?

Mr. François Le Moine: Basically, the ministers concerned, and the Department of Canadian Heritage in particular, misunderstood their role in the competition.

There's actually a text, amendment number 2 to the first request for proposals, which explains exactly what the role of the Department of Canadian Heritage should have been. That text was includ-

ed in the contract documents and thus guided the department's behaviour. It states, "An expert jury is being assembled for this competition." Then it continues as follows, "The Minister of Canadian Heritage, as minister responsible for commemorative monuments on federal lands in Canada's Capital Region, and the Minister of Veterans Affairs, will be jointly responsible for endorsing the jury's selection of the winning design."

That was the role of the Department of Canadian Heritage. It wasn't to second-guess the jury or to challenge what it did, but rather to endorse its decision to ensure the project was properly carried out.

I can yield the floor to Francyne Lord because I believe that's what normally happens for public art experts.

Ms. Francyne Lord: In the competitions that I've been involved in, either because I was responsible for the Montreal competition or was a member of the jury for another body, the person responsible for the competition received the jury's recommendation and forwarded it to the authorities concerned with awarding the contract.

During that time, between the jury's decision and the awarding of the contract, there is no action, interference or interface. There is nothing. The jury's decision is merely transmitted to the authorities that award the contract.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[English]

I'd like to invite MP Miao.

Please go ahead.

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

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today.

Excuse my French. I will have to ask my questions in English.

I'd like to also take this opportunity to share with all of us that this week is also Veterans Week and that this Saturday is Remembrance Day. I'd like to take this opportunity to share our tributes to all those who have sacrificed and served our nation.

Through you, Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask Team Daoust a question.

I understand where the situation is now. Maybe you can share with this committee some insight into what leads your team to participate in the submission of the national monument to Canada's mission in Afghanistan competition.

Ms. Renée Daoust: I'm sorry; I'm not sure I understood the question.

Mr. Wilson Miao: What leads your team to participate in this kind of contest?

Ms. Renée Daoust: Do you mean what type of work we have to do when we participate in that type of competition?

Mr. Wilson Miao: Basically, what makes you want to...?

Ms. Renée Daoust: Oh, it's what makes us want to.

Well, in this particular instance, what was quite interesting in terms of the competition was, first of all, the topic itself. It's a very serious topic, the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, and to us that was a very interesting topic.

Second of all, it's an important public commission. It's more than \$3 million, let's say, for the the artwork.

There is also the location. It's an exceptional location, on Parliament Hill between Parliament and the War Museum. All of these elements were really interesting to us, so this is why we decided to participate. The topic was so important that we, as a team, because that was the interest of this competition.... It's a multi-disciplinary team that had to participate, meaning architects, landscape architects and the artist, Luca.

Also, because the topic is so sensitive, we connected with Madame Arbour, because of course she understands the mission and so on. Whenever we do a competition, we always want to make sure that we understand the history or the significance. These are civic gestures and they're important gestures, and they will last for a lot of years to come, so we take this very seriously.

The site is exceptional, so we do think as a team that we have a civic duty associated to that, and this is why we were so interested in participating in that competition.

Mr. Wilson Miao: Thank you very much for sharing that with us.

I understand there was a change in location as well, prior to having this finalized, for the purpose of the contest. Understanding that the servicewomen and servicemen who sacrificed in Afghanistan are the reason we're doing this to commemorate the work they have done for all Canadians, would you feel it's important to also include the opinions of our veterans who served in that mission as part of this design selection? Reading through the requirements, we don't see too much of the veterans' voices in the selection process.

Ms. Renée Daoust: To refer to the competition, first of all, the site was a selected one. When we got the documents, when we started the competition, the site had been selected.

We just want to connect with something. It's very clear in the documents that this monument is to celebrate the Canadian mission in Afghanistan, which was composed of veterans, of course, and of civil society. This is what we really understood through Madame Arbour's participation: It's not only the veterans, of course; it's the veterans and civil society.

To respond to your question, because we did hear Madame Petipas Taylor talking about the veterans and so on, we want to make sure everybody understands what happened at the beginning of this process, which is that the veterans were consulted. Prior to the elaboration of documents, the public and the veterans were consulted, and because they participated, it was built into the competition documents. When we received the documents, their opinion was already integrated within these documents. We want to make sure everybody understands that. It was very clear in all the documents we received. Their opinion was considered, because they built that into the documents. That was the first step.

For the second step, there was supposed to be a public hearing or a public consultation, which is usually how they do it with these types of monuments. We participated in the LeBreton Flats competition and so on, and there was a public consultation, which we always agree with, because there we get the opportunity to present our projects and to explain the subtleties we cannot explain when you only present a document or a video and so on.

This did not happen. Mind you, it was in the rules of the competition.

Instead, the government decided to do a survey, and of course they got responses back. The survey was not dedicated solely to veterans; the public had the opportunity to answer, and the members of the jury did look at the result of that survey, which was integrated in their conclusion when they selected us as the winning team.

• (1655)

Mr. Wilson Miao: I guess I'm out of time.

Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Miao and Ms. Daoust.

I invite Mr. Desilets to take the floor for the next six minutes.

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Greetings, colleagues.

Thanks to our guests for being here. Your testimony is important in helping us draw a conclusion and in moving this somewhat unusual matter forward.

Mr. Chupin, earlier you suggested that competitions have been around since time immemorial. I'd like you to tell me a little more about that. Why were the mechanics of competitions established?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: Mr. Chair, competitions exist because sometimes it's very hard to judge, understand or grasp the complexity of the situation.

Historical competitions are organized whenever something symbolic is involved, as is the case of this monument, but that can also be true of the Dome of Florence Cathedral, the Parthenon and major civic monuments and buildings, as I said. The Parliament of Canada was designed by competition. Competitions were systematic practices in England in the 19th century.

Consequently, competitions are organized every time a situation is complex, involves many issues or elicits contradictory expectations. In the present instance, the veterans must obviously be considered, but also Canadians as a whole and thus, as it were, everyone. As I said, competitions are also organized when budgets are an issue and, in some instances, as a result of technical and siting issues.

So it's all very complex, and opinion poll procedures simply can't provide a clear picture of those complexities by gathering a few "likes". You could almost say that, in the history of dictatorships, leaders organized competitions to prevent situations from escalating. There are some quite surprising stories of that point of view. It's as though the competition process was the only way to—

Mr. Luc Desilets: Pardon me for interrupting, Mr. Chupin, but I sense you could go on about this for hours.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: That's quite all right.

Mr. Luc Desilets: I read somewhere—and these are not your words—that competitions are organized in order to prevent political interference, among other reasons.

Is that true or false?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: It's absolutely true.

Mr. Luc Desilets: That's what we're experiencing in the case of this competition. A department has simply decided to meddle in the matter and not to abide by the jury's decision.

Do you think that decision can really undermine Canada's international reputation?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: It already has, in a way.

As I said, some of my colleagues have contacted me. The database, which is a kind of national resource, is being consulted by many thousands of people around the world.

When one of my colleagues, an expert on competitions in Quebec, and I learned about this decision, we were flabbergasted and published an opinion piece about it.

So I can tell you that Canada's reputation is already somewhat tainted—

• (1700)

Mr. Luc Desilets: Are you talking about one country or many countries?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: I'm talking about many countries. Generally speaking, the advanced democracies are watching what's happening—

Mr. Luc Desilets: I'm not nice because I'm interrupting you again, Mr. Chupin. However, your answers to my questions are perfect.

There are 500 competitions in the Canadian Competitions Catalogue. Has the government ever previously disregarded a jury's decision and arbitrarily decided the winner?

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: No jury decision has ever been replaced in response to the result of an opinion poll. Moreover, as far as I know, it hasn't happened anywhere in the world. Obviously, I may be mistaken, but—

Mr. Luc Desilets: It has never happened anywhere else in the world.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: That's it.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you very much.

Mr. Le Moine, you say that the government simply had no right to award the contract to a team other than Team Daoust.

Exactly what do you mean by that? What right are you referring to?

Mr. François Le Moine: I'm simply alluding to the competition rules which I discussed earlier. The departments concerned were supposed to receive the jury's recommendation and, normally, to endorse it and ensure that the contract was awarded to the winner. There was indeed another possibility, which is the case with any requests for proposals and under competition rules, and that is to cancel the competition.

It's obviously impossible to cancel a competition in all circumstances. It has to be done in a manner that's fair for all bidders. There are rules regarding cancellation. Competitions are rarely cancelled, but it's possible to do so.

However, there was no provision for awarding the contract to someone else, which runs contrary to the entire practice in public art and architecture, as the experts testified earlier.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Do you think there have been any precedents in Canada that are slightly similar to this situation?

Mr. François Le Moine: There's very little case law on competitions. There is a kind of consensus on method, but there has been very little debate on that.

However, there's a great deal of case law on requests for proposals, but that's another matter.

The competition system is well established and, in general, infrequently challenged.

Mr. Luc Desilets: What do you think are the potential legal consequences of an arbitrary decision such as the one the government has just made?

Mr. François Le Moine: Once again, I'm thinking of architecture and public art. The consequences are that the practice will discourage people from submitting bids or sitting on a jury.

It's all well and good to sit on a jury, but what happens then? People will work for a year, but the proposal may well be set aside. In addition, will the best architects and artists submit their entries?

It's relatively complex from a legal standpoint, given that there's little case law. I don't think we have the time to go into that issue in detail today.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Ms. Lord, earlier you said you had been involved in 75 public art competitions and had never seen a jury decision overturned.

Ms. Francyne Lord: I've never seen it.

Mr. Luc Desilets: You've really never seen it at all.

Ms. Francyne Lord: That's correct.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Lord, Mr. Desilets and Mr. Le Moine.

Mr. Boulerice, you now have the floor for six minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for being here.

Ms. Daoust and Mr. Fortin, I want to tell you from the outset that I'm sorry for everything that has happened to you. I think you've been treated absolutely unfairly by the Department of Canadian Heritage and by the federal government. My apology will serve no purpose because I wasn't involved in the decision, but I frankly have to say I find it appalling on the part of a great country and an advanced democracy such as Canada

Mr. Le Moine, I'm going to ask you a question. If we were on *Tout le monde en parle*, this would probably be the killer question. Mr. Desilets started talking about it, but I'm going to go a little further and use stronger language: you said that the ministers didn't have the authority to override the jury's decision. And yet they did.

Is that an illegal act?

Mr. François Le Moine: Quite sincerely, since there's a lot of case law on competitions, it would be hard for me to cite you in actual decision.

However, at the very least, norms and processes are important in a democracy. The rule of law requires that both the governing and the governed abide by preestablished rules under which actors may act knowing what awaits them.

Clearly in this instance, the rules were changed along the way or, at the very least, that's the impression we get. Perhaps the competition could still be redone, but it appears, in the present circumstances, that the most elegant solution for all parties would be to reverse the decision that was made.

• (1705)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: I see. Thank you.

Mr. Chupin, you said a little earlier in that it was particularly important to publish the jury's report and that you didn't understand why it hadn't already been done.

Please explain to us ignorant people why you think it's so important to publish that report.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: It's like a court decision.

Following the process, all Canadians must be able to understand why a jury, which operated independently and, normally, discreetly, made its decision. We're talking about a public competition here.

A report exists. I'm sure it exists. We also tried to obtain it and were told that we would only get it in several months, or even a year. In short, it's being postponed.

This document exists, and it explains exactly how the judgment was made, a qualitative judgment on a complex subject. It exists and it must be made public.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: We can see the lack of transparency in the entire process, which seems to have gone all wrong since you received the letter on June 19.

Ms. Daoust and Mr. Fortin, I'm quite honestly unfamiliar with this kind of competition. So that people and the members of this

committee have a clear understanding of the situation, what kind of investment of time, energy and resources does the development and submission of a competition project represent?

Ms. Renée Daoust: It represents a lot of energy, particularly in this case because it took one year to develop the proposal. It was done in two stages. First, we had to submit our application. The government selected five candidates and asked all five to prepare a whole series of quite exhaustive documents. We had to prepare drawings, presentation texts, and animation and many other elements. That necessarily takes time and energy, and the competition lasted nearly one year.

Then we were asked to make a presentation. So we made our presentation to the jury, and that was done virtually because of the pandemic. You should know that these competitions are judged solely by a jury, but we always prepare a technical report on our proposal. The technical committee called us back to request details of our proposal for the monument. So we had to work on that as well. Then we submitted the whole entry.

So it requires a great deal of effort. These are obviously projects that we consider interesting and prestigious, but they require a great deal of energy from the team. We are just two representatives here today, but we have a large multidisciplinary committee that includes urban planning designers, architects, landscape architects, artists, advisers, cost experts and so on. It involves major teamwork.

Mr. Luca Fortin: I would like to add that the mere fact that our application was accepted was due to the sum of all the work we did in advance. After seeing our proposal accepted and winning the competition, it was quite disappointing not to be able to enjoy the knock-on effect that can have on a career.

As we said at the outset, we want to recover the commission, but we also want to ensure, for our peers, that this doesn't happen again. Our society can't afford to impoverish itself culturally because high-quality candidates refuse to enter competitions for lack of trust.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Would you be tempted to enter this kind of competition today?

Ms. Renée Daoust: If the government maintains the position that it isn't required to abide by its own ground rules, I would say no. It takes too much of a team's energy to do so. In addition, if we had clearly been told that the outcome of the competition would be based on a survey, we wouldn't have entered it. This work has to be judged by experts. It's really that kind of work.

• (1710)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your remarks.

We will now go to a second and final round of questions.

I will unfortunately have to stop the last two. So we will have four interventions, two of five minutes each and two of two and a half minutes.

With that, I invite Mr. Paul-Hus to take the floor for the next five minutes.

Go ahead, Mr. Paul-Hus.

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

I have five minutes to wrap this all up, whereas we are facing a potential public affairs management scandal.

We're dealing with a private business that can't fight a government. That business is the victim of a decision that makes no sense. However, our committee has a responsibility to raise this issue and move it forward.

It's clear from the testimony we've heard that the department's decision was baseless, particularly since the information that led to that decision—I'm referring to the survey—was completely demolished by Leger Marketing. Jean-Marc Léger completely demolished the survey as absolutely worthless.

I'm a veteran and I support your intervention and your request. I know that things were done based on rules that make no sense.

In addition, and I'm attesting to it here, I attended a meeting of this committee last week at which the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Ms. St-Onge, denied all responsibility completely out of hand. I was flabbergasted. I couldn't believe it. I hope she has taken note since then and studied the file.

Furthermore, as a Quebecker—we are all Quebeckers here—I want to point out the role played by the former Minister of Canadian Heritage, Mr. Rodriguez, who signed off on the change. So he's part of the equation, and Ms. St-Onge is aware of nothing.

I want to point out to the committee that it's important to emphasize this because this is the first responsibility of ministers.

Lastly, I would like to go back to the decision. The entire situation is compromised. The competition process clearly wasn't followed.

Mr. Le Moine and Mr. Chupin, you told us that, under competition rules, a minister may not reverse a jury's selection. Can you show me the exact line in the rules that can confirm that?

Let's get this straight: I believe we're dealing with a kind of outright scandal, both for your business and for the process in Canada.

Mr. François Le Moine: Do you want to have the actual documents?

You have to understand that, in this case, the Department of Canadian Heritage brought its expertise to the table and that it appears everywhere in the documents, which is normal, because—

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: The fact that the minister or government changes the jury's decision—

Mr. François Le Moine: That information appears in the first paragraph of the document entitled, "Design Competition—Request for Proposals, Competition Requirements". That's in the introduction.

The document includes what all the teams must know about the requirements for submission, deadlines, payments and jury evaluation, as well as information on the resulting contract for the winning team. One clearly understands that the winning team is selected by the jury.

So it's absolutely clear when you read the document that there was no way in which to eliminate the winning team.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I'm speaking to Team Daoust, but your lawyer and Mr. Chupin may respond. I have a question, but I know it will be hard to answer.

Why was the other team selected?

Do you have an idea of the real reasons why the government and ministers selected the other project in such a cavalier manner?

Ms. Renée Daoust: No, I have no idea.

In one way, that's not the case we're making. There's a procedural flaw in the process, and that's what we want to address.

Rules had been established and they weren't obeyed. That's really what we want to condemn and decry.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Has any one of you heard that there might be some sort of relationship with the winning team, such as a friend who knows a friend of a friend who might know something?

Do you think it could be that type of thing?

Ms. Renée Daoust: We're absolutely unaware of that.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Having said that, I don't want to put you in delicate position.

I think the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has done a good job, but we'll have to go even further.

There really was a serious procedural flaw in this Canadian process, and it must not go unaddressed. Team Daoust doesn't have the resources to conduct a legal battle against the Government of Canada. Consequently, it's up to us elected members to do our duty and help it.

● (1715)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Paul-Hus.

You have 30 seconds left, but I'm going to ask Mr. May to take the floor for five minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all of the witnesses for being here with us today.

I believe it was Mr. Richards, when the ministers were here, who conveyed our hope that we can get this monument built as quickly as possible, and I think we are hearing from veterans across the country that this is the priority and that it is taking far too long.

We had the minister here. The minister made it very clear—both the ministers—that on this issue.... She said that she was listening to veterans, and that was her top priority.

I'm wondering if the folks from Daoust can maybe convey what their top priority is with this project.

Ms. Renée Daoust: The top priority with this project is to respond to what was asked in the formalization of the monument to commemorate the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

Mr. Bryan May: So—

Ms. Renée Daoust: If I may say so....

Mr. Bryan May: Continue. I'm sorry.

Ms. Renée Daoust: The idea is that we got rules and got the documents that were describing them. We've followed them. As we're saying, the veterans' opinion is very, very important. It was provided through the documents, because they were consulted prior to the redaction of these documents. They were consulted prior to that; it's written in the documents. They were also consulted through a survey. I would say that in the third instance, what we did was connect with Madame Arbour to understand what everyone went through, meaning the civil society plus the veterans. This is what we wanted to reflect in the monument that we conceptualized.

Mr. Bryan May: Then it's the process that is critical in this, not necessarily the sentiment of the veterans, as a top priority.

I'm short on time here. However, I do think that it is very critical to recognize that....

You mentioned earlier that you would not have participated if you had known that there was a survey. Did I hear you correctly in saying that?

Ms. Renée Daoust: No, no. You heard me wrong—

Mr. Bryan May: Can you maybe clarify that—

Ms. Renée Daoust: Yes, for sure.

In every competition—

Mr. Bryan May: What I heard through one of the other individuals was that if there was a survey, you would maybe not have participated in this.

Ms. Renée Daoust: No. What I said was that if the survey was to change the jury's decision or was to become the priority, we would not have participated, because these are not the rules of the game.

Let me answer your first question. The monument is called *Le Monument commémoratif national de la mission du Canada en Afghanistan*. This is what we had to respond to. There was a brief, which was well done. We responded to that, which included, of course, consultation amongst the veterans and so on, so this is a whole—

Mr. Bryan May: I'm sorry. I have to move on quickly because I know I'm running short on time.

I do have an important question here for Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin.

You mentioned that in the entire world, there is not an example of this. I'm wondering, sir, if you know about the process of the

Holocaust museum, the first process of the Holocaust museum in Berlin. Are you familiar with that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: Mr. Chair, comparing competitions is always a delicate business because you need to compare the rules that accompany them. In the history of competitions, there obviously have been cancelled competitions.

What I said is that there have never been any competitions in which a judgment was cancelled by a vote or survey during the process.

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May: Can you maybe share with this committee why that competition was originally changed or why they didn't award through the original process in Berlin? What occurred there?

I agree that it's not identical, but to make definitive statements to say that this kind of thing has never happened anywhere in the world I don't think is accurate.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: What I said is that you have to compare competition rules. In this competition, there was even a provision under which the government could withdraw in the event there were any irregularities, which incidentally surprised me. You very often find that provision in connection with competition juries. It enables a government—

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May: Mr. Chair, the process in Berlin—

The Chair: Mr. May—

Mr. Bryan May: Members of that Jewish community—

The Chair: Mr. May—

Mr. Bryan May: —came out very strongly against the process in Berlin.

The Chair: Mr. May, sorry. Please let Mr. Chupin respond to that. We have interpreters.

Mr. Bryan May: My apologies.

The Chair: You still have 20 seconds in this round.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you.

Perhaps I will just wrap up. In that scenario, in Berlin, there was a process. The process resulted in a decision that was very much protested against by the Jewish community, and that process was halted and changed.

For us to sit here and say that this kind of thing has never happened before and make these kinds of definitive statements, I think, is incorrect.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Chupin, I'll allow you 15 minutes... pardon me, 15 seconds, to respond to that intervention.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Chupin: Mr. Chair, I would've taken advantage of the 15 minutes. I didn't say there had been no cases of cancelled competitions in the world. Competitions have obviously been cancelled and controversies have arisen over competitions, just as there are controversies over voting, surveys and requests for proposals, as Mr. Le Moine said.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chupin.

I now invite Mr. Desilets to take the floor for two and a half minutes.

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

Mr. Miao, I want to add something to the question you asked earlier.

You asked how much time this kind of project would take for a team such as Team Daoust.

There were 7 jury members for this competition. That's a total of approximately 300 hours to put in place and develop the competition. There was also a technical committee. In addition, it wasn't just one firm, but nine others that did the same work.

That's really an extraordinary waste of public funds.

Mr. Chair, as you may suspect, I have a motion to introduce.

I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1), the Committee ask the government to produce all e-mails, memos and other documents, unclassified, exchanged between the various departments involved in the selection of the artist and design team for the national memorial to Canada's mission in Afghanistan, namely the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council; and that all such documents be received by the Clerk of the Committee, in both official languages, no later than November 17, 2023;

That the Chair of the Committee immediately report to the House that the Committee denounces the government's about-face and lack of respect for the rules in deciding not to award the design of the commemorative monument to the team linking the artist Luca Fortin and the architectural firm Daoust Lestage Lizotte Stecker, which won the competition conducted by a team of experts set up by the Liberal government itself;

And that, as part of its study of the commemorative monument, the Committee add a meeting and invite Mr. Pablo Rodriguez, former Minister of Canadian Heritage, and Mr. Lawrence MacAuley, former Minister of Veterans Affairs, to testify for a minimum of one hour each, within one week of receiving the documents.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desilets.

Is that a notice of motion or—

Mr. Luc Desilets: I'm moving it for immediate discussion.

The Chair: Thank you.

Do you have the English version of the motion?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Yes, it has been submitted.

The Chair: The clerk has just distributed the motion.

Considering the rules of procedure, we are now ready to discuss it.

Go ahead, Mr. Richards.

• (1725)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): That motion contained a lot of elements.

Would it be possible to ask Mr. Desilets to read it again?

The Chair: Mr. Desilets, would you please read your motion again, slowly so the interpreters can handle it?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Of course.

I move:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(1), the Committee ask the government to produce all e-mails, memos and other documents, unclassified, exchanged between the various departments involved in the selection of the artist and design team for the national memorial to Canada's mission in Afghanistan, namely the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council; and that all such documents be received by the Clerk of the Committee, in both official languages, no later than November 17, 2023;

That the Chair of the Committee immediately report to the House that the Committee denounces the government's about-face and lack of respect for the rules in deciding not to award the design of the commemorative monument to the team linking the artist Luca Fortin and the architectural firm Daoust Lestage Lizotte Stecker, which won the competition conducted by a team of experts set up by the Liberal government itself;

And that, as part of its study of the commemorative monument, the Committee add a meeting and invite Mr. Pablo Rodriguez, former Minister of Canadian Heritage, and Mr. Lawrence MacAuley, former Minister of Veterans Affairs, to testify for a minimum of one hour each, within one week of receiving the documents.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desilets.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Chair, it must be understood that this is where we now stand. We've taken a good number of steps. We've met with the ministers, no one has received answers to their questions, and the decision has been based on a sham survey. We have some appallingly opaque issues to clear up.

If the two current ministers can't answer our questions—you've seen it as well as I have—let's bring in the two ministers who made the decision so they can explain the reasoning, if there is any, behind this decision.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desilets.

I have consulted the clerk, and considering the time we have for this meeting, we would need committee members' consent to continue the debate on the motion that you just introduced.

Since everyone seems to be in agreement, we can continue the debate. I know witnesses are interested in the subject as well, but I nevertheless apologize to them on behalf of the committee as we continue this discussion.

Go ahead, Mr. Paul-Hus.

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

This is a very important motion. As I mentioned earlier, we have to shed some light on this matter. Team Daoust doesn't have the resources to do anything else, having already made a major effort.

We have a responsibility here. I repeat: what bothers me most is the process that was used. Once again, the government is making decisions that run counter to what a government should normally do, as it has done in several files over the past eight years. The Liberals do everything a government shouldn't do.

That's why I think it's important that we get to the bottom of this and acquire the documents we need to get a clear understanding of what happened in this matter, which is extremely important.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Paul-Hus.

• (1730)

[English]

Mr. Bryan May is next.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you.

I actually have two questions, and something additional to say after we get the answers.

First of all, I don't know if the clerk can answer this off the top of his head, but how many more meetings do we have until we rise for the Christmas break? Even an approximation would be fine.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Alexandre (Sacha) Vasiliev): It's four weeks total, so it's eight meetings—

Mr. Bryan May: With four weeks in total and eight meetings, how many more meetings do we have left for the current study on women in the military?

The Chair: We have about eight.

Mr. Bryan May: I mentioned this last time when the motion for this meeting came up. I would have liked to see us get to completion of the women's study to allow the analysts to take advantage of the Christmas break. This is becoming mission creep, in my opinion, in terms of this study, and I think it disrespects the current study that we are engaged in.

Also, Mr. Chair, do we have witnesses today for that study now as well?

We do. Okay. What I would ask is if we could dismiss the current witnesses and go directly to the study that we are engaged in.

I think we have a responsibility on this committee to stay on mission. I think we agreed to this women's study. If we want to continue to push that further down the line, that's the decision of this committee. My preference—and I would hope it's the preference of everyone in this room—would be that we get to the women's study and finish it so that we can come back with strong recommendations in the new year for the government for it to solve some of those critical problems.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. May.

[Translation]

Now I would like to invite Mr. Boulерice to take the floor.

Mr. Alexandre Boulерice: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think Mr. Desilets' motion is important for two reasons.

The first is transparency. We have to get the documents we need to get to the bottom of this issue and gather the necessary information. All too often, certain departments are not transparent enough. This motion covers the transparency aspect.

The second is the principle of ministerial responsibility. We have to speak to the ministers who were in place at the time and who made those decisions. If we summon ministers who are occupying

new positions and who say that they weren't there and that they're sorry, who aren't really aware of what happened and who slink out the back door, we won't get real ministerial responsibility or accountability.

For the moment, the people from all the parties around the table have spoken. For all these reasons and out of respect for the witnesses we have invited to appear, I request a vote.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boulерice

We will now vote, but please allow me to release—

[English]

An hon. member: No—

The Chair: Yes, but if someone asks for a vote....

Mr. Blake Richards: No, no. I've got mine listed. As long as there's a speakers list, until you exhaust the speakers list, someone cannot, procedurally.... You cannot—

The Chair: All right.

[Translation]

Please allow me the time to say goodbye to the witnesses because they may have other commitments, including Mr. Le Moine and Mr. Chupin, who is a professor. Please allow me the time to say goodbye to them. If they want to stay, that's fine. Then we'll continue the discussion.

Members of the committee, in this hour, we will have with us François Le Moine, lawyer; Francyne Lord, public art consultant; and Jean-Pierre Chupin, holder of the Canada Research Chair in Architecture, Competitions and Mediations of Excellence and full professor at the Université de Montréal, by videoconference; and, from Team Daoust, Renée Daoust, founding partner, architect and urbanist, as well as Luca Fortin, artist and architect.

You mentioned documents in your remarks. If you have them with you, I would ask you please to hand them to the clerk so they can be distributed to committee members.

With that, I want to thank you for your presence here in committee.

We will continue the debate.

I see that Mr. Richards and Mr. Casey want to speak.

Go ahead, Mr. Richards.

• (1735)

[English]

Mr. Blake Richards: There are a couple of things I want to touch on. One thing I wanted to discuss is very similar to what Mr. Boulерice just had to say, so I won't spend a lot of time on it.

I think it was clear to everybody that there was a lack of due process followed here in this situation. I heard some statements today from some of the witnesses that were, I think, incredibly shocking to hear.

I heard statements about an exceptional lack of ethics by the government, that no artist is going to wish to take part in future competitions, that they've never seen outside experts disregarded, that it will tarnish the government's credibility, that it undermines confidence in the government. I heard that although competitions can be cancelled, in everything they've ever seen, generally the jury's decision is received and then conveyed to those who would put it in place. They talked about people being discouraged from entering future competitions and people being discouraged from being a part of juries. We had a witness say that Canadians need to be told why such a decision was made. I heard a lot of statements today that concern me.

I think what Mr. Boulerice just said was very accurate. The idea that somehow, just because the government changed ministers a few months ago, they can come in and say that they don't really know what happened and avoid accountability for what we're hearing is an incredibly unusual, if not unprecedented, situation in a jury's decision being completely disregarded. Whatever one thinks about the monument that we will have is irrelevant; there is a need for people to follow a process and for the government to follow a process.

From that perspective, I think it is important that we do hear from them, because accountability does rest with ministers who were in place when the decisions were made. We need to follow that line.

Had I not heard the kinds of things I heard today, I might have viewed this motion differently. Hearing those kinds of things and seeing ministers shrugging off accountability because they weren't there at the time the decisions were made tells us that this is a pretty important thing for us to hear.

The idea was put forth by one of the government members that this would somehow make us disregard our current important study that we're doing on women veterans. We have nine meetings left. We have eight meetings left in our study on women veterans. Hopefully, that means we can complete it by Christmas.

I know there are other things. I don't know if there will be supplementary estimates or anything like that, but there's a chance that other things will come up. Even if that were to occur and we're one or two meeting shy of being able to complete it, we could give the instructions to the analyst to start preparing a report based on everything we have heard, which would be 95% of the testimony we will hear. Then we finish the last couple meetings and the analyst can add in from those meetings, and we really wouldn't be delaying at all our ability to have a report.

We're going to hit Christmas. We're going to have six or seven weeks when the analyst can work on the report. He can do that either way. Either way, early in the time period after we come back from that break, we can review that report and have it completed. The report would not be delayed by more than maybe by a couple of days. Given that we've given it such a thorough study, I think taking a couple of extra days to finish a report won't be the end of the world. I think we can still do it the justice it absolutely deserves and also ensure that we're doing this the justice it deserves as well.

If you have ministers coming in and saying, "Well, I wasn't there, so I'm not accountable", then we need to hear from those who were there.

I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Richards.

Now I would like to invite Mr. Sean Casey to take the floor.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The last time this committee pushed back the women's study for something that was a political priority of one of our members or one of the parties here, we became the subject of an awful lot of angst in the women veterans community, and the lack of sensitivity exhibited by this committee in pushing back the women's study in favour of something else was front page news.

I'm concerned about a repeat of that. When that happened, Mr. Desilets very wisely put an end to the debate on the motion out of respect for the witnesses. I therefore move that the debate on this motion now be adjourned.

• (1740)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: I heard the words "demande d'ajournement"; I must go to the vote.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Richards: I have a point of order before that vote, Mr. Chair.

My understanding is that the speakers list was now exhausted, unless you had someone added to it in the time Mr. Casey was speaking. Therefore, we could have had a vote on the actual motion. We can obviously choose to defeat his motion and then have the vote immediately.

It looks to me like Mr. Casey's just trying to avoid accountability on the part of the government.

The Chair: First of all, as I said, I didn't hear anyone asking for a vote on that motion, but we just heard "adjournment".

An hon. member: The speakers list is exhausted, so we vote—

The Chair: No—

Mr. Sean Casey: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Just a second, on the point of order.

Mr. Sean Casey: The motion I moved is not debatable and must go straight to a vote.

The Chair: I know. That's why I'm asking for it. You're going to have to vote on that. It's up to you, the members of the committee—

Mr. Blake Richards: To be clear, now we'll have two votes, rather than the one we could have had immediately to vote on the motion.

The Chair: We're going to take the vote on adjournment of debate on this motion.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: I have a question....

Go ahead, Mr. Casey.

Mr. Sean Casey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The motion we have before us proposes three things: The first is an order for production of documents, the second is that there be a report made to the House, and the third is an invitation to two other witnesses.

With respect to the first paragraph, I believe something should be included there to ensure we are not seeking things that are protected by cabinet confidentiality.

With respect to the second paragraph, I believe it to be premature. In my view, we would be prejudging what's in the documents and we would be prejudging the testimony of the ministers to immediately report to the House that we have reached a conclusion with respect to this matter, so I'd like to propose an amendment to the motion: I move that the second paragraph of the motion be deleted.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Casey.

An amendment motion has been introduced to delete the second paragraph of the motion introduced by Mr. Desilets.

Who wants to debate it?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Chair, I would like to say something.

The Chair: The floor is yours.

Mr. Luc Desilets: The proposed amendment is utterly unacceptable.

I understand that the motion is long, but this is where we stand. We have to find a solution to this conflict, and it isn't complicated: the government must reverse its decision.

The authorities that we have solicited thus far have given us an acceptable response. I therefore want to retain the second paragraph.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desilets.

As I see no other speakers, we will proceed to the vote on Mr. Casey's amendment.

(Amendment negatived: nays 6; yeas 5)

The Chair: So we come back to the motion.

Are there any comments? No? Then we will go to the vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 5)

The Chair: Mr. Desilets, is a date specified in the motion so instructions can be given to the clerk? I don't have a motion before me.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Yes.

The Chair: All right, excellent.

Colleagues, it is now 5:50 p.m. As we began this meeting at 4:24 p.m., we may continue until 6:24 p.m. I want to be sure that the technical team is indeed in place. And we will suspend for five minutes at most so we can prepare to receive our next witnesses.

• (1745)

(Pause)

• (1755)

The Chair: We will resume.

[*English*]

For the second hour, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on Monday, October 3, 2022, the committee is resuming its study on the experience of women veterans.

[*Translation*]

I wish to inform the members of the committee that the connection tests were successfully completed.

Since we will be discussing our study on the experience of women veterans, it is appropriate to provide a trigger warning, especially in the presence of veterans. I therefore want to inform you that this meeting could be triggering to people who are here and to viewers. We therefore wish to inform you of that fact.

Allow me to greet our guests.

[*English*]

Our witnesses for the second hour are, from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ms. Jennifer Ebert, assistant commissioner and commanding officer of B division, by video conference; Ms. DeAnna Hill, assistant commissioner, commanding officer of J division, by video conference; Ms. Nadine Huggins, chief human resources officer; and Ms. Joanne Rigon, executive director, executive liaison officer, national compensation services, human resources.

[*Translation*]

Nadine Huggins will present opening remarks on behalf of the RCMP.

[*English*]

Madame Huggins, you have five minutes for your opening statement. Please go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nadine Huggins (Chief Human Resources Officer, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Good afternoon.

Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to join you today.

The Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mountain Police, Michael Duheme, is unable to be here today as a result of prior commitments, but I am pleased to be able to address the committee on his behalf.

• (1800)

[English]

It is a very important week of remembrance, and first I would like to acknowledge and thank all of those who have served and continue to serve in uniform.

I am Nadine Huggins, and as the senior assistant deputy minister responsible for human resources at the RCMP since May 1, 2022, I am keenly aware of the important work our members perform, often at personal risk, while serving communities and keeping Canadians safe.

Since 2020, I have been leading the development of our people management modernization efforts, along with the creation of our people strategy and our Vision150 equity, accountability and trust action plan and, most recently, the equity, diversity and inclusion strategy for the RCMP. These programs are shifting mindsets, values and behaviours in support of the commissioner's commitment to a modern, inclusive and trusted RCMP.

[Translation]

I would respectfully note that, as I am in Ottawa, I am speaking from the traditional unceded lands of the Anishinabe nation.

We all work in different places, and, consequently, you may be speaking from the territory of another Indigenous nation.

[English]

I would like you to take a moment to reflect on and acknowledge the territory from which you are working.

I really welcome the opportunity to speak with you about the experience of RCMP women veterans, and I'd like to acknowledge proud and trailblazing women such as our honourable and former commissioner Beverley Busson, who testified earlier, and our recently retired Brenda Lucki, as well as women who continue to serve today in the RCMP, such as the commanding officers who are joining us today.

First and foremost, transforming workplace culture is a priority for the RCMP, including instilling a healthy management culture. Our vision is for a healthy, inclusive and trusted RCMP that our employees, stakeholders, partners and the communities we serve expect us to be and deserve us to be.

Realizing this vision will ultimately enable the RCMP to achieve operational excellence.

The RCMP has undertaken a number of initiatives that address women's unique experiences or concerns in the organization, as well as when they leave the uniform behind to pursue new challenges.

These initiatives target specifically our kit, equipment and clothing; fitness assessments; and developing future leadership that will aid efforts to enhance the recruitment, retention and transition experience of women in our organization.

These efforts have been guided by a body of knowledge about the factors that limit women's willingness to pursue a policing career, similar to those that you would have heard about from the armed forces, and the understanding that many of these same fac-

tors result in unsatisfactory attrition and retention rates and poor discharge experiences.

The RCMP recognizes that the barrier to attracting female candidates to policing, aside from the inherent risk of the job, is the culture.

The RCMP is moving deliberately beyond the traditional recruitment response and looking to challenge our practices from an equity perspective. We understand that often the main barrier to engaging talent from diverse populations is the behaviour of the organization itself. The challenge is not to market better but rather to increase the RCMP's capacity to be an employer of choice.

Women and other equity-seeking groups moving within and out of the RCMP and transitioning to civilian life can expect member-centric, personalized and integrated services. We intend to support their needs. To this end, we continue to work with our stakeholders to achieve this.

The RCMP is building internal capacity to work in close collaboration with Veterans Affairs to better position the organization and our retired members.

We've implemented gender-based analysis plus throughout our policies and procedures, as well as in the decisions we take around kit, clothing, and other elements.

The RCMP continues to make inroads as we move to ensure that we are an employer of choice, not just for our members in uniform but also for all of our employees.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Huggins, for your opening statement.

We're only going to have one round of questions. It will be for six minutes each in order to finish around 6:30.

I invite Mr. Fraser Tolmie to begin. You have six minutes, please.

• (1805)

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Thank you, Chair, and thank you to our guests for being here today.

In preparing for this meeting, we get a bit of background information. In this committee, we've heard a lot of valuable information about the experiences of female Canadian Armed Forces veterans. I'm pleased to get the opportunity to speak with you today, because the RCMP Depot is in Regina, which just borders my riding. I have some close friends there and I'm very excited to have you here.

Finding information on the specific experiences of female RCMP members is not that simple. Even academic studies often noted that information on the experiences of RCMP women veterans was simply not found. With this lack of research and information, one of the challenges we are facing when it comes to RCMP veterans is that there's just not a lot of information, so to have you here today is important.

Is that something that should go into our report—the lack of information?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: I will start, and then maybe I'll hand it over to Jennifer Ebert or to DeAnna Hill to supplement.

There's always value in encouraging an evidence base for the work that any of our organizations do to ensure that we're being more equitable and inclusive. While we are diligent in our practical approaches, having fundamental research in the area of women veterans can only be beneficial.

Jennifer Ebert or DeAnna Hill, would either of you like to supplement that answer?

Ms. Jennifer Ebert (Assistant Commissioner, Commanding Officer, B Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): I can speak on that.

It's Jennifer Ebert. Thank you for having me, Chair.

I think it's important to have an evidence-based approach and to understand that there are vast differences due to the geography and the type of work that RCMP officers do, especially female police officers. I have been in for 26 years. I've been in six provinces and nine postings, all contract policing, and I'm a commanding officer, so I have a very specific view, whereas my colleague DeAnna Hill would have a different view, as would other female officers across the country. That's why I think it's incredibly important to have that evidence base: It's because my experience isn't necessarily others' experiences, since I've obviously been quite successful as an assistant commissioner and a commanding officer for the past six years.

I'll hand it over to DeAnna, my colleague.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: I appreciate that.

Ms. Ebert, one of the things I've noticed, being in Moose Jaw, is that Sylvie Bourassa-Muise was the Depot commander, so we've seen a projection and we've seen our female veterans being able to move up while they're in the RCMP.

While I have your attention, one of the questions I have is this. We've talked about equipment challenges for those who are in the CAF. Is that something female veterans in the RCMP and serving police officers experience as well?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: I can start and then transfer...

Jen, did you want to start with that?

Ms. Jennifer Ebert: I can start with that. Sure.

There are certainly challenges specific to kit and clothing in relation to female police officers. It has changed a lot over the past several years through the use of a GBA+ lens in the way we fit our kit. There have been a lot of changes to the dress and department manual within the RCMP, including reducing gender requirements and

allowing males and females—all genders of police officers—to pick the kit that is best suited to them. I traditionally fit better into men's pants than I did into what were traditionally women's pants. The changes allow fluidity in the way that we're handling kit and clothing now. They allow for that.

In relation to some of our kit and clothing, we're still working to make it more comfortable for all of our police officers, but there are certainly unique challenges with women in kit and clothing.

• (1810)

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Are those changes because of physical trauma that is put in place because of wearing that equipment, or is it just comfort? That can be an issue as well, but is there physical trauma?

If someone's in the CAF, they're wearing a heavy 60-pound pack. It's a bit different in the RCMP, but there are belts and guns and other things that people in the RCMP use.

Is there anything that you can share about that?

Ms. Jennifer Ebert: I can speak from my experience in relation to that. You referred to the belts. There have been changes to the way that's done. Obviously, a gun belt is going to sit lower on the hip on women and fit differently. There have been changes in our dress and department in relation to the type of gun belt we're using, as well as other changes that would allow overalls and those types of things.

Women's body shapes and types, similar to men's, come in all shapes and sizes. However, from personal experience, after having children, I know there are certain changes that happen to women's bodies that affect the way they may fit into the uniform. It's the same for the modernization of our pistol and fitting smaller hands.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Chair, I didn't see the one-minute flag there.

The Chair: You were not looking at me. It's over.

You know you can split your six minutes. It will also be really important to choose the witness whom you would like to answer the questions.

Now let's go to MP Carolyn Bennett for six minutes, please.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Toronto—St. Paul's, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I would like to know who actually is in charge of the veterans. I also hope that we will hear from some women veterans from the RCMP, seeing that it's quite complicated in terms of how RCMP veterans, but particularly women veterans, as I think we know, were excluded from the Veterans Well-being Act.

How do you compare the services that are available to RCMP veterans with those available to CAF veterans? I think we heard last week that how people are treated while they're serving affects how they are treated as veterans. If the questions on women's health were not asked while they were serving, then they end up having trouble dealing with that.

As well, in terms of work-related accidents, how do you deal with people when there is sexual trauma that clearly is work-related and not an accident? How are you dealing with women who have left your employ traumatized? How do you deal with that? How does that differ? How many veterans file claims with VAC for sexual trauma?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: Thank you very much for the questions.

We take the client-centred approach very seriously in the organization. The needs of women who have any injuries of any kind are addressed quite substantially and substantively and immediately.

I'm going to allow—

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Just to be clear, in terms of their health care once they're a vet, isn't this now downloaded to the provinces and territories?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: Yes. There are the provinces and territories, but we work with Veterans Affairs to ensure that they receive the pensions and the health care they require, such as any supplemental health care they may need.

I think it probably would be great for Joanne to take this part. She's the subject matter expert on the actual implementation of the veterans piece.

• (1815)

Ms. Joanne Rigon (Executive Director, Executive Liaison Officer, National Compensation Services, Human Resources, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you for the questions and the opportunity to answer.

Our members who are still serving do fall under provincial health care, but the RCMP has supplemental benefits in health care that go beyond what provinces might need if it is an occupational injury or illness. For our—

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Does that include sexual assault?

Ms. Joanne Rigon: It would cover any kind of injury or illness as they work it through our occupational health and services process. I would suggest that they would bring forward any injury or trauma or illness. That would be dealt with, along with the appropriate supports that would be required by our members.

For those veterans, certainly, the RCMP has a “member injured on duty” program—

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: We're looking at veterans' experience. Do you have feedback loops on whether they feel they're getting the supports they think they ought to have? Do you have an advisory committee of women veterans to see whether they feel their supports and services are adequate in supplementing the provincial and territorial systems?

Ms. Joanne Rigon: I'm pleased to tell you that we work with the RCMP Veterans' Association. That relationship is continuing to ma-

ture and develop. We are actively working towards a transition framework with members who are still serving and as they move into civilian life.

We are also discussing what supports women veterans would need, as well as what other veterans who are leaving the RCMP would need. We are actively working with them to enhance those services and supports.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: In terms of mental health supports and perinatal mental health, I think there's good evidence showing that the experiences of women veterans while they're serving are very different from what they experience once they become veterans and are being accommodated for what they experienced while they were serving.

Do you have any recruitment retention numbers? Are women lasting in the service as long as the men?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: In terms of specific numbers, we'd be really pleased to provide you the latest data we have on recruitment and retention writ large for the organization, including for women. We are seeing that we are maintaining our numbers. About 23% of our population are women. They do tend to stay with the organization for about 20 to 25 years, which is a little shorter than for men, but I think there are a number of reasons for that.

We'd be happy to provide the committee with the numbers that we have. We'll send them off to the clerk, if that's okay.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Desilets, you have the floor for the next six minutes.

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

Thanks to all our witnesses.

Ms. Huggins, I'd like to expand on the matter that my Conservative colleague raised earlier.

At the last meeting of this committee, we heard about Canadian military members, both veterans and in service, who had undergone mastectomies because their equipment wasn't adequate and caused repetitive injuries. It appears that's the solution that they found.

Are you experiencing that the RCMP as well? Have you heard of any such cases?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: Honestly, no, I've never heard of that, but I'll ask my colleague, DeAnna Hill, to provide some clarification on the equipment issue.

[*English*]

Maybe I'll ask DeAnna if she would like to explore her experience with our equipment, because I'm not aware of a situation in the RCMP of somebody having to modify their body to actually fit into our equipment.

Ms. DeAnna Hill (Assistant Commissioner, Commanding Officer, J Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police): Thank you, Nadine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

I personally certainly could not recall an instance that I have heard of in the past, and I am one of those people who will soon be a veteran. I have 34 years completed in the RCMP and may likely be on the other end of things in the not too distant future.

I come from a time when our kit looked very different from the way it looks today. There have been significant adjustments made in terms of uniformity. Instead of having female equipment versus male equipment and issued dress, that has all been adapted so that we can select pants or skirts. There are lots of things like that.

The broader issue, from my perspective, is the extensive amount of equipment that a police officer is meant to don on a daily basis. One of the large problems comes into play when most—

• (1820)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Ms. Hill, I'll just refocus my question.

I'm talking about cases that were reported to us of mastectomies in the Canadian Armed Forces. You're telling me there are no such cases in the RCMP or that you have never heard of any. Is that correct?

[English]

Ms. DeAnna Hill: Do you mean breast removal specifically in order to wear equipment?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Yes.

[English]

Ms. DeAnna Hill: I have not heard of that whatsoever.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: So you're telling me, Ms. Hill, that the RCMP's equipment is different from that of the Canadian Armed Forces and that it's more suited to women than that of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[English]

Ms. DeAnna Hill: I couldn't speak to a comparison between what the military dons and what we wear on a daily basis.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Similarly, do you see more musculoskeletal problems among women than men in the RCMP?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: I'll answer your question, Mr. Desilets.

Yes, we see more musculoskeletal problems among women. I believe my colleague Ms. Rigon has some information that she can give you today, but, if you want more information on problems affecting women, we can send that to you.

Mr. Luc Desilets: I would be very grateful if you could send the committee all the information you have.

That's one of the problems that women have, particularly in the Canadian Armed Forces, because the equipment isn't designed for them. That's why I'm surprised to hear that the RCMP's equipment doesn't cause breast-related problems among women. It may be a matter of sampling, but so much the better if it's really not a problem.

Ms. Huggins, what is maternity leave like for women in the RCMP?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: It's the same maternity leave as is offered to public service employees, which is one year of leave that can be extended to up to five years.

Mr. Luc Desilets: That's fantastic.

Do you notice any differences after birth? Have any studies been done on that?

We've seen that the children of female military members experience problems. Have you observed any similar problems in the RCMP?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: I can't give you a clear answer to that question because we haven't done enough research that indicates these kinds of problems exist.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Going back to what Ms. Bennett said earlier, you regularly associate with people from the Canadian Armed Forces. Do you get the impression that sexual assault complaints are handled differently in the RCMP than in the Canadian Armed Forces?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: I can't comment on the Canadian Armed Forces. However, in the RCMP, we take all such complaints very seriously. We're revising our code of conduct to ensure there is zero tolerance for sexual assault, discrimination or racism in the RCMP.

Mr. Luc Desilets: I have another question regarding sexual harassment and sexual assault complaints.

Does the RCMP have a directory that you can consult to determine whether such and such a person has committed sexual assault or sexual harassment?

• (1825)

Ms. Nadine Huggins: We usually examine that kind of conduct on a case-by-case basis, and such conduct is entered in the person's record. However, we don't have that kind of searchable directory.

Mr. Luc Desilets: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Desilets.

[English]

I'd like to invite Ms. Rachel Blaney to take her six minutes, please. She's on video conference.

Go ahead.

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

Welcome to all of our witnesses today. I'm really excited about your testimony. Thank you so much for being here.

I'm going to start by asking Ms. Huggins if she could answer and decide where the question should go if she's not the right person.

You spoke a bit about the transformation of the workplace and specific initiatives that are being done for women, and you said that those efforts are based on a body of knowledge. What are the specific initiatives and what is the body of knowledge that is informing those initiatives?

Ms. Nadine Huggins: Thanks very much for the question.

The organization is really quite focused on ensuring that we put all of our policies and our procedures through a gender-based analysis plus review. We started that process with our kit and equipment. As Assistant Commissioner Ebert elaborated, things look very different from the way they looked previously, and that is in part because of the gender-based analysis review we did.

The transformation for women in the organization has fundamentally been about ensuring that we develop leaders from all genders and that we ensure that those voices and those lived experiences are brought to bear as part of our decision-making in all areas. When we talk about transformation in the RCMP and we talk about how it impacts women, it's taking into consideration the recommendations and reviews that have been done on our organization, really taking them to heart and implementing them.

In fact, just recently, the commissioner appointed a new senior ADM responsible for transformation in the organization, whose primary role will be to ensure we implement all of the recommendations that are coming out of the variety of reviews to which the organization has been a party.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you for that.

I'm wondering whether you could share—if you know—how or whether the RCMP has implemented, or is implementing, any recommendations from the Bastarache report entitled “Broken Lives, Broken Dreams”, the final report on the implementation of the Merlo Davidson Settlement Agreement.

Ms. Nadine Huggins: Thank you for the question.

I can unequivocally say that we are definitely implementing the recommendations coming out of Bastarache. We publish, on our public-facing website, the progress we're making as it pertains to the culture change we've been driving at through Bastarache.

We can certainly support the committee by providing links to those reports to the clerk for your consideration.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you. I appreciate that.

I have a second follow-up question on that point. I know there has been some commentary that changing the culture from within can be a challenge and that there needs to be some support from external sources to change that culture.

I'm wondering how the work is going in addressing those recommendations in that area.

Ms. Nadine Huggins: Thank you for the question.

We are in fact quite engaged with our management advisory board as it pertains to any number of areas of change within the organization, including the culture change element.

The board has been expanded over the last months. In fact, I'm heading off to meetings in Yellowknife with the board in the next

couple of days in order to orient some new members and continue the work we've been doing, not only in implementing the Bastarache recommendations but also in modernizing the organization writ large.

• (1830)

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Thank you.

I hope I have this right. Please correct me in your response if I don't.

I understand that women RCMP officers are staying for a period of time. It seems pretty stable, but it's not as long as it is for their male counterparts. I think I understood that. Can you correct me in that understanding if I'm wrong?

Also, can you explain the process of collecting data about serving RCMP officers who are women? I'm asking how women-focused information is being gathered, as well as what measurements are being done around women staying in the forces and around women's health outcomes through the period of time in which they serve.

One thing we heard from CAF veterans is that if they don't have information documented for the service part, when they get to the veteran section of their life, they're not getting the supports they require because the documentation wasn't done well.

I'm wondering whether you could talk about what's happening at the RCMP and how that is going.

Ms. Nadine Huggins: Thanks very much for the question.

I'll get it started and then I'll hand it over to Joanne Rigon, who is the keeper of all the knowledge in this particular area.

With regard to the collecting of data about women and their medical files, it is very important for us to have a complete file for our women members when they are in the service. There is increased comfort, I think, among women members coming forward if there are issues. Because of the efforts we're making around culture change, there isn't an effort to camouflage as much as there was before. I'm optimistic that we're doing better than we used to.

Perhaps Joanne can give us some updates on some numbers that will help supplement that.

Ms. Joanne Rigon: Thank you, Nadine.

Thank you for the question.

In the RCMP, the health records for both women and men who are serving are as comprehensive as they can be. We encourage our members to ensure that things are documented, especially when they are injured or ill on duty. That helps facilitate any applications for compensation to Veterans Affairs Canada in that regard.

Certainly, in terms of—

The Chair: You have 15 seconds. You can complete your intervention.

Ms. Joanne Rigon: Thank you.

Certainly, it's about ensuring that Veterans Affairs gets provided with complete information in order to do any type of adjudication in that regard.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mrs. Blaney.

Before I salute the witnesses, as you said, you have some documents on recruitment, retention and other things. Do not hesitate to send everything to the clerk.

I have a special request from our analyst for the report. We would like to know the number of claims for sexual trauma submitted by RCMP veterans to Veterans Affairs. We would be pleased to receive that kind of information for our report.

[*Translation*]

Ladies and gentlemen, in this second hour, we have heard from representatives of the RCMP, to whom we now say goodbye.

By videoconference, we had Jennifer Ebert, assistant commissioner, commanding officer, B division; and DeAnna Hill, assistant commissioner, commanding officer, J division.

We also had, in person, Nadine Huggins, chief human resources officer; and Joanne Rigon, executive director, executive liaison officer, national compensation services, human resources.

Once again, on behalf of the committee members and myself, we thank you for coming to meet with us today.

I'd like to thank the entire technical team and everyone who worked on this meeting, and I say goodbye to the members of the committee.

The meeting is adjourned.

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