



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

Standing Committee on National Defence

EVIDENCE

NUMBER 067

PUBLIC PART ONLY - PARTIE PUBLIQUE SEULEMENT

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Chair: The Honourable John McKay



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• (1610)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.)): I call this meeting order. I see a quorum and we're running late.

Colleagues, the Canadian Forces just lost a number of members. We're not quite sure exactly. I just wonder if we could stand for a moment and remember what they do for us and the risks that they take. Then we'll resume our meeting.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

Thank you.

We have with us this afternoon the external monitor. We have a number of time challenges. The first-time challenge I need guidance on is whether we run until 5:30 or past 5:30.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): We run until 5:30.

The Chair: Okay, then 5:30 it is.

Second, it's been suggested to me by Ms. Normandin that she would like to hear from Madame Therrien for 10 minutes as opposed to five minutes. If I do that, then we'll have to necessarily cut back on members' time.

Is five minutes good?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien (External Monitor, As an Individual): Five minutes is good.

The Chair: Consider that request withdrawn.

With that, we'll ask you to start your five-minute opening statement. If we run for an hour, that will take us to 5:15. We just agreed to do an in camera meeting for 15 minutes. I think we're going to have to cut this back to five o'clock, because we do have a half-hour of business. It's the last time we're going to meet, and we do have a lot of work. We'll run this meeting until five o'clock.

I appreciate your patience, Madame Therrien. We look forward to your opening statement for five minutes.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien (External Monitor, As an Individual): Thank you, Chair and members, for the invitation to appear before this committee.

Last October I was appointed as external monitor, pursuant to recommendation 48 of the report from the Independent External Comprehensive Review, which was completed, as you know, by former Justice Arbour, and it was made public last year. My mandate is to provide advice and to report on the implementation by

DND and the CAF of accepted recommendations from Justice Arbour's report as well as recommendations from other external reports.

In accordance with the recommendation, I am to provide the minister with a biannual status report. My first report was issued a few weeks ago and it contains my observations from November to the end of April 2023, addressing the progress on about half of Justice Arbour's recommendations. I will admit that the time frame for a first public report made for an intensive learning curve. That said, I made myself very present in the lives of many people at the DND/CAF, and they were generous with their time.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

I've met with many senior leaders in the organization. To them I posed the question, "What have you been doing to address the spirit and intent of the recommendations for which you are responsible, and how is any of it different this time?"

I believe that the revelations regarding senior leaders in 2021 represented a galvanizing moment. I'm seeing a strong will to make things better in the DND/CAF. The organization is fully aware that it needs to maintain a work environment that will attract and retain the best candidates if the CAF is to remain a viable, professional body.

As noted in my first report, I have seen definite progress in addressing a number of the recommendations. Notwithstanding these achievements and the existing actions, the DND/CAF needs to be more strategic in its approach. At this point in time, National Defence is responding to hundreds of recommendations related to culture from several external sources. The recommendations cover a broad set of systems and practices belonging to different organizations within the DND/CAF. Some are complementary and some are not.

I explained in that same report that there is no overarching framework that would allow DND and the CAF to improve the prioritization and horizontal coordination of their efforts. There was some work done to rank the individual recommendations, but it was done without a general focus of effort. This is an essential element, not only to ensure that individual recommendations are implemented, but also to ensure that they produce, as a whole, the positive culture change that is sought.

[English]

I believe that the many recommendations this government has accepted need to be rationalized, according to established principles, criteria and themes, so that those recommendations most likely to have the biggest impact on culture change remain the primary focus. I have recently learned that this is happening.

Members of the DND and CAF have consulted broadly, both internally and externally, on the subject of sexual misconduct. They also have readily available information from many stakeholders. Never have they been so informed as to what they need to do and the organizational levers that they need to focus on.

I am now working to ensure that my next report will provide a further update on the recommendations that were addressed in my first report, but will also contain the remainder of the recommendations on topics such as recruitment, promotions, complaints and grievances, and the policy framework surrounding this area.

I also plan to review the data being used, and the implementation of the provisions of the Declaration of Victims Rights, which came into force in June 2022.

I thank you for this opportunity. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Therrien.

I should have read this note about the audio. This room is equipped with a powerful audio system, and feedback events can occur. These can be extremely harmful to interpreters and cause injuries. The most common cause of sound feedback is an earpiece worn too close to the microphone. We therefore ask all participants to exercise a high degree of caution when handling the earpieces, especially when your microphone or your neighbour's microphone is turned on.

We're all guilty of this, and I don't want to make it any more difficult for the interpreters than it already is.

With that, we're going to cut the six-minute round to four minutes.

Mrs. Kramp-Neuman, you have four minutes.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you for being here, Ms. Therrien. I'd like to thank you for all the work you have been doing, in the short amount of time you've been tasked to do it in.

Who do you report to?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I report to the minister, because I provide her advice. Every month, I provide her with a report. This report, the public one, goes to her.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Do you also report to Parliament, to cabinet, or is it just the minister?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: It's just the minister.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: How often are you in contact with the minister?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: On average, I have contact once a month.

• (1620)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: At any point during its development, apart from the minister, whom you've mentioned you directly report to, has any other minister, or any other staff from any other minister's office, including the PMO, formally or informally been in contact with you via phone, in person or email to discuss any of the content?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: No.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Further, you've noted in your report that the agenda is instead being driven by availability of resources and capacity issues.

Does the CAF have the capability required to implement all of the recommendations?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I believe they have the capability. I would suggest that currently they have the will, but I do believe that they have to prioritize.

The fact is that there are not unlimited resources, there is not unlimited time and they are dealing with hundreds of recommendations from external sources about culture change, so they have a lot on their plate.

They have to come up with this framework of how they're going to move forward.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Further, the CDS has characterized our retention and recruitment crisis.

Do you believe that progress made to date has had any impact on the recruitment and retention rates of the Canadian Armed Forces?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Apparently the numbers are looking good in terms of new recruits. I know there is a lot of effort going into that because clearly they need warm bodies to be able to conduct their work. There is a lot of emphasis on that aspect of what they're trying to do.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Okay.

Do you feel that the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence have effectively implemented all, or even a majority, of the recommendations made by Madam Arbour?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I can't say that it's all or many—quite a few. The thing is, there are many that will never actually be closed off or completely met because they will be ongoing for a long time.

Can I give you an example?

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Certainly.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Recently, it was announced that there is a launch of a program to provide legal assistance to people who have been affected by sexual misconduct. That's the first phase. There are going to be quite a few incremental phases to that, so that's a long-term thing.

Can I say that it's completely done? In theory it is, but it's good to keep that window open.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: When the report was released, Minister Anand immediately accepted the 17 recommendations.

These are people's lives, and people have legitimate concerns that need to be addressed. The reports are important, but action is needed.

Would you suggest that those full 17 are implemented, or that you have the full intention for them to be implemented?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: They're all very close to being implemented, and for those that aren't completed, it's imminent in a lot of cases.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Do you believe a change of minister or political will would make it possible to implement the recommendations, finally?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I have to say that the minister is very committed to this. I can't see that she could be any more committed or what it would change.

The department takes a certain amount of time to complete the tasks that are required.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Kramp-Newman.

Mr. Fisher, you have four minutes.

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

Thank you very much for being here and for taking on this job. You used the term “learning curve”, and you threw yourself into the job. I remember when I was first elected as a member of Parliament, when I was asked, I said that it is like drinking from a fire hose. I did the same thing; I threw myself right into the job.

Your report focuses on three major themes: prevention, support to affected persons, and input and oversight.

I know you had only five minutes at the start, but can you elaborate a bit and inform the committee about the progress made on all three of these themes?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: As pointed out in the report, I believe there has been a lot of activity. I chose those themes because, for me, they were logical.

If you can prevent these instances from happening in the first place, as opposed to dealing with them after the fact, that's always a good thing. I list a few items in there that I believe fall into that prevention category.

Support to victims is crucial, clearly, and that has come a long way. The SMSRC, the centre that is there to support victims, has really expanded its services. I hope that people out there know that it exists. That's sometimes the issue.

In terms of external input and oversight, that was one of the themes of Madam Arbour, and I believe she is right. There needs to be a lot of external input into how the military does things.

• (1625)

Mr. Darren Fisher: In the conclusion part of your report, you emphasize the need for a strategic plan to coordinate the implementation of the recommendations.

Can you tell me how you feel that's going, and whether you feel you have the support for your work?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I had been talking about the need for a strategic framework for about a month before the report was made public. It was becoming, obviously, more and more clear to me that, without that, there was going to be a lot of activity, but it was not necessarily going to be focused on the recommendations that are the most critical.

I've been told that now they are working on such a framework. There's a lot of support for it, actually.

Mr. Darren Fisher: From all you've seen so far, do you feel that your work is going to be taken seriously by the government and by the Minister of National Defence?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: So far, I'd have to say yes.

Mr. Darren Fisher: What about work that was done before you were named in the fall of 2022? When you came into the position and you were thrown into that learning curve, did you see that things were set up to be taken seriously by government and by the minister as well?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Yes. They had already set up the division within the armed forces. It's the umbrella that is now responsible for culture and professional conduct. That's from 2021.

They also, later that year or early the next year, established what's called the ECRIC, which is the committee that is set up to ensure the implementation of external reports.

Those are two things.

Mr. Darren Fisher: That's all I have.

Thank you.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. Fisher.

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for four minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Thank you very much.

Thank you for being with us today, Ms. Therrien, and thank you for the work you do.

Some recommendations have been out there for a while, such as transferring files to civil authorities.

When recommendations are implemented, sometimes it turns out that changes have to be made over time. Would you please comment on that?

For those files that have been transferred to civilian authorities, have any issues come up over time that would prompt you to take another look at the recommendations? For example, some of the more complex cases, such as when members of the military are stationed in one place at the time the misconduct occurred, but now live in another place. It isn't always clear which civilian authority should deal with it.

Is that part of what your team is considering?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: It's not my job to question the purpose of the recommendations. Still, people do talk about various obstacles. Some people wonder if this is really what's best for victims of sexual misconduct.

Recently, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces began talking to all their provincial and territorial partners about how best to follow the process.

Also, from what I understand, these discussions will be useful in that they will make it possible to look at cases where files have already been transferred and to learn from them.

I think that is how we'll be able to see what's working and what's not. Sometimes, one of the two people involved in the case lives in another province. Let's just say that doesn't work as easily in reality as it does on paper.

I think these consultations will help us learn things like that.

Ms. Christine Normandin: If it becomes clear along the way that there are obstacles preventing some of the recommendations from being implemented as written, what would be the process for revising those recommendations, if necessary?

Would Ms. Arbour be involved? Has that already been considered, or is the way forward unclear?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: We're taking one step at a time. We'll see how things unfold. That was a recommendation that was accepted. For the time being, we're moving forward. However, it's important to see if course corrections are necessary along the way.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

This matters to me because there's a military college in the riding I represent.

I'd like to hear your comments about the study that should be done on the proposal to take military training out of colleges. Where are you on that study, and what criteria should be part of it?

One criterion that comes to mind is a comparative analysis of the two colleges because people often say that they're very different, so there may be some lessons to glean there rather than throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater.

● (1630)

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: As far as I know, that significant difference between the two colleges will be scrutinized. I've visited both of them, actually.

When I visited the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston in March, college representatives had just visited the Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean to find out what kinds of cases were being used as good examples for training.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Is any thought being given to other criteria that should be scrutinized to determine what should be done about military colleges? I'd like your comments on that. How is that going to be done?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I don't have that information at the moment. However, the criteria will be released very soon.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

[English]

Ms. Mathysen, you have four minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you so much for being here today.

To build off a past question, you said that you report directly to the minister. One of the key findings was that externality to investigate such things. The ombudsman for defence himself has said that he must be able to report outside of the minister.

Do you truly feel that you can be external when you only report to the minister?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I actually do, because even though we discuss things, she's made it abundantly clear that I am to do what I am to do on my own. I have never felt any constraint whatsoever, truly.

What I say in my reports to her on a monthly basis are my thoughts, and my thoughts only. What I said in here is what I had to say.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Okay.

When Justice Arbour came to the committee, she was very concerned and frustrated that it didn't look like any progress would be made on the duty to report, for example. There's a working group. The chief of the defence staff himself said, "I've signed off on these things". That hasn't been moved forward on.

In terms of that externality and that pressure that I guess you're supposed to put on the ministry, on the department, were you given any access to the deliberations internally on, for example, what's happening on the duty to report?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I keep asking on a regular basis what's going on, where this is and what the delay is. Yes, there's a briefing note to discuss the risks. There's a lot of discussion about the risks, so that takes a certain amount of time. When you change a major policy, that one in particular—

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Is that why it wasn't included in your report? Is it because you haven't got there yet?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: It's just not there, but that one is truly imminent.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: It's truly imminent.

To be perfectly honest, it's been called for for a very long time.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Yes, since 2018. The Auditor General was the first one to bring it up. Back then—

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Do you know what the delay could possibly be, other than the fact that it seems so significant? Is there any other delay that you know of or you've been made aware of?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: There's a lot of consultation that takes place in that organization, and it leads to delays. The conversation seems to just go on and on. That's why the framework is important, because it will say, "We have to move on faster on these than what's happening."

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: You believe wholeheartedly that by the time you are ready for that second update, it will be ready.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I do.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Okay.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I'm confident.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Okay, so you've seen that...? Okay. All right.

In terms of that transparency, there was a story in the Ottawa Citizen about an access to information request. Information was not shared by the military, yet a reporter was given access to information. It almost seemed like there was a disconnect between the department and what was being shared by an external source in the form of an ATIP.

In terms of your externality and that transparency, are there any concerns around that, in what you're being allowed access to within that—

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Within the department?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Yes.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I truly feel that whatever I ask for, I am getting. I have assistance from somebody who knows the department inside and out, and she's very good at seeking information on my behalf.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Colleagues, we've made some decent time, so instead of a three-minute round, I think we'll go to four minutes. It will go four, four, two, two, four, four.

Mr. Bezan, you have four minutes.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madame Therrien, thank you for taking on this role. Thank you for the work you did in the Auditor General's office before that.

To be clear, are you staffed at all and able to do your job? How many people are assigned to you?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I have two.

Mr. James Bezan: Are they out of the Department of National Defence?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: No, my EA is within what is called the “corporate secretariat” which is sort of a neutral knob in between DND and the CAF. The person who is helping me with the actual work was in internal audit, and she assisted Madam Arbour and Madam Deschamps. That's why she was the perfect choice for this.

Mr. James Bezan: I think you said you reported it directly to the minister. Did the minister's office peruse this report at all, before it was released publicly, or were you able to release it publicly without them putting any edits—

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I submitted it to her. At one point, she reviewed it and it became public. She did not change anything or ask for any changes.

Mr. James Bezan: Perfect.

You mentioned the Deschamps report.

Are you following any of those recommendations through, in order to see whether or not they came to fruition? We know Minister Anand's predecessor let it collect dust for several years without ever looking at it.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Within my scope, I have the Arbour report. I am including anything going back to...starting from Deschamps...that talks about sexual misconduct.

Mr. James Bezan: Do you believe that, had the Deschamps report been acted upon back in 2016-17, we wouldn't be in the mess we got into at the end of 2019-20?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: You know, as somebody pointed out recently, even if all the recommendations are fully implemented, will that fix everything? We don't know.

Mr. James Bezan: Okay.

In your report, you talk about some of the legislative changes required, everything from duty to report.... You also talk about the probationary period for new recruits and, until that happens, making use of the regular enrolment release.

First, do you think there's a due process for those people getting released under those auspices, in order to make sure their jurisprudence is respected? Second, have you recommended to the minister that they bring forward the appropriate legislative or regulatory changes needed to implement all of these recommendations?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I have been asking for the plan for legislative changes for this year and have seen various versions.

On there, for example, recommendation 5 is an important one. There are other ones on there. I've asked about the probation. There is currently a discussion as to when they will seek legislative change on that, because what they're suggesting is that they can go at it from other ways that are less complicated.

In other words, do we absolutely need legislative change to accomplish what the recommendation suggests?

Mr. James Bezan: Would that include recommendation number 5 to remove sexual offences under the Criminal Code and...outside of the National Defence Act?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: No.

Mr. James Bezan: When we look at the referral of sexual offences to the provincial court system, and to municipal and provincial policing agencies.... You talked about how 90-plus cases have been referred over.

Have you been talking to the provincial ministers or policing associations to see whether or not they have the court and police resources to take on these extra cases from National Defence?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I have not had direct conversations with those groups, no.

Mr. James Bezan: Do you think that's important to have, in order to ensure we have the capacity to deal with [*Inaudible—Editor*] National Defence?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: The consultation paper... They are expecting the results in June. They've canvassed all those people you've talked about. That's part of the issue—the resourcing. That comes in the next little while, and it will be the starting point of—

Mr. James Bezan: You'll have eyes on that and make sure—

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thanks.

The Chair: We have Mr. Sousa for four minutes.

Mr. Charles Sousa (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for your testimony. I appreciate what you have to say, the report you produced and, more importantly, the notion of trying to change the culture—trying to be more effective and have proper treatment.

I want to build on some of the questions that were just asked.

In section I on prevention, you highlight the “strong commitment...to operationalize CAF ethics and values with regard to creating a safe and inclusive workplace and inculcating those values into the next generation of military personnel.” You also say, “This will be instrumental in the shift towards a safer workplace.”

Can you elaborate on how these good-faith efforts among senior leadership and the continuation of a productive relationship with departmental officials will support the implementation of your report recommendations? What parts are DND and CAF doing well, and what can the defence team learn from this?

• (1640)

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Hopefully, this answers your question.

As I stated in the report, there's a lot of activity. Everybody has been tasked with some of the recommendations from the Arbour report and the Fish report released the year prior. There's also the minister's panel on systemic racism and the Heyder Beattie class action. A lot of recommendations have come out of that. There's a lot of activity, consultation and movement, but it needs to be thought through so that you have a coherent approach going ahead. In the end, we could say, “Yes, those 10 recommendations are done”, but did they really do what they were supposed to?

They have to think it through—how to prioritize and coordinate better.

Mr. Charles Sousa: In her report, Madam Arbour saw “the external monitoring playing a key role in holding the relevant stakeholders to account, including senior Defence Team leadership.”

In your role, and certainly previously as a member of the Auditor General's office, you should be able to help ensure that team leadership then follows through on those meaningful and lasting cultural changes in the armed forces.

Can you do that? Are you part of that?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: They know this report is coming. Even in December, when there was an update to Parliament and Madam Arbour and the minister were present and so on, they were already talking about the fact that at the end of April the external monitor produces that report that says “yea” or “nay”. As well, they know

that another one is coming up in another five months. That makes a difference.

It's monitoring. It really is monitoring, and I believe it's making a difference that way. Will it forever? Maybe not. Maybe the novelty will wear off after a while.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm encouraged by the steps the minister is taking. Obviously, she's been a huge asset for consumer protection with a number of measures in her past life.

Certainly on this issue, she's very clear as to what she would like to see happen. Are you encouraged that there is leadership coming from the top and that it will resonate through?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: There is definitely leadership from the top and a sincere willingness, but the devil is in the details. That's what we're working on through these recommendations, doing the thing that is expected to really change things.

There are organizational levers that are very important when you want to change culture. Are they focusing on those? Yes, because they're focusing on the recommendations, but some of those have to happen sooner rather than later.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sousa.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Normandin, you have the floor for two minutes.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Therrien, I'd like to come back to something you said.

You said you'd heard that some of the recommendations weren't the most appropriate and that they didn't help with transferring cases to civilian courts, for one thing. You talked about the fact that it is no longer the military police handling the files, but the civilian police.

Having conducted your study, do you think it makes sense to analyze how effective the recommendations are in addition to how they're being implemented? If we go all in with a measure that turns out to be harmful, that doesn't help anyone.

Is that part of your thought process and your analysis?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Personally, I'm always going to ask, “How do you know you did what you were asked to do?” It's one thing to carry out a recommendation to the letter, but was that really what was expected? I imagine the answers will vary.

With respect to transfers, we'll have to wait until some of them have happened before we can understand if it's being done reasonably well.

Ms. Christine Normandin: Should the effectiveness of these measures be analyzed periodically? Once we know they've been implemented properly, will someone be checking to make sure they're still effective?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: That should be part of good management practices in any department. You have to understand what's going to be used to clearly understand if an approach is the right one. It's important to ask if the understanding of the situation is correct and what information is going to be used. That should certainly be analyzed on a regular basis.

• (1645)

Ms. Christine Normandin: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Normandin.

[English]

Ms. Mathysen, you have two minutes.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I'll go back to that transfer of criminal sexual offence cases to the civilian system. Justice Arbour was very clear that as long as they're allowed to prolong in concurrent jurisdiction, there will be this bouncing back and forth.

The idea was that the government needed to bring forward legislation, yet that's been delayed, although Justice Arbour was very clear. Did you see conversations and speak about those conversations in terms of that legislation coming forward quickly?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: It's being definitely discussed and brought forward. I mean, it's—

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: But you don't necessarily have a timeline?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: There are two issues. There's the application of the recommendation within Canada and external to Canada, so I think there are two different timelines for that.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: In your next report, will there potentially be another timeline update on that?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: There should be. I would hope the department has been able to clearly bring some legislative modifications forward.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: I just wanted to ask this quickly as well. A lot of folks who survived through military sexual trauma were really disappointed to see the piece about the independent legal assistance program. They were happy to see there was coverage, yet they were shocked to see it wasn't covered for the Human Rights Tribunal, which a lot of these cases go to.

Are you seeing any progress on that or are there any concerns from your perspective?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I'm seeing progress on that. The whole complaints and grievance process is being radically transformed. The link-up with the CHRC is very important in all that. There have been a lot of meetings to engage that.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: They've shown that the concern for—

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Mathysen.

Mrs. Gallant, you have four minutes.

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

The report says, "right-fit candidates' (including increasing diversity) to be posted even if there is no direct correlation with the rank/occupation of the position available."

That refers to the staff at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School.

Does that sort of policy—that "right fit" is more important than the actual ability—apply to other parts of the military or is it just the staff school?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: This seems to be a relatively new practice. They have clearly understood the message from Madam Arbour that the instructors have to be top-notch. You can't just be sending people there if you don't really know where to put them. They have to be the people who can really talk about the right character and so on.

I asked them what they were doing about this. They said that they are trying to ensure that the right people are sent. This is where they said that they have even gone to the point of being flexible enough that if it's not the right rank necessarily, but they know it's the right person, they will make arrangements to make it work.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: They would do that even though it's not necessarily the occupation of the person who's teaching.

How are you tracking the uptake of the Arbour recommendations amongst the supervisors of young female reservists?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I'm not directly involved in that.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: It's just not being done. They were left out, then.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Do you mean the reservists?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Yes, I mean the young female recruits particularly on the reservist end.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: They may be captured in certain areas that I would be looking at, but per se, it's the people who are going through the regular force as opposed to reserve.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: With respect to Madam Arbour's suggestion that the military colleges abate their culture by referring to an orthodoxy that is incompatible with today's society, how is this being accomplished while preserving the traditions these institutions have passed on to generations of service members?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I'm sorry; I'm not sure I understand.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Arbour suggested they have to update their culture because the orthodoxy of the culture is incompatible with today's society. How is this being accomplished while preserving the traditions and institutions that have been passed on for generations?

• (1650)

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: That's why there is an external panel that will review the two colleges to establish what's going right and not so right there.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: How would the probationary period for military candidates enrolled in military colleges impact the retention of the students going in there?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Well, they're two separate things. The idea of the probation is to ensure that you are able to quickly dismiss people who have toxic views or behaviours.

Retention is a whole other set of efforts going on because, of course, the CAF needs to not only attract people, but it needs to keep them, so they have to work on that aspect, too.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: That's right.

Has any connection been drawn between the implementation of the Arbour recommendations and the highest attrition levels in 15 years at the Canadian Armed Forces?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: The CAF regularly looks at why people are leaving. It analyzes that non-stop.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Are exit interviews done?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: There are a lot of surveys being conducted. It wants to know why people are leaving. It's really calculated this: Okay, at x number of years, why are they leaving—men, women...? It constantly looks at that information.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gallant.

Mr. May, you have the final four minutes.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Madame Therrien, thank you so much for joining us today.

Your report notes that your next report will focus on several areas from the IECR that you have not yet reported on, including recruitment and complaints and grievances, among others.

Can you inform this committee about what's happening between now and the next status report in October with regard to these areas?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Just to be clear, it's not that I haven't done any work on those areas yet. There have been a lot of meetings and a lot of discussions on complaints and grievances, on recruitment and retention, on promotions. I wanted to do a more thorough look before I commented on those. That's what we're doing now.

We're deep diving into all of these things, along with a few other things like the Declaration of Victims Rights. That's not something that comes up in any of the.... Well, I shouldn't say that. Former Justice Fish brought it up. It came into force only in June 2022, around the same time that the Arbour report was released. We're doing the rest of the Arbour report but also a few other aspects.

Mr. Bryan May: With the complexity of all of these recommendations and all the different steps, as you say, can you suggest how we can better communicate the important steps toward culture change that the government is making at this point?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: One of the points I made in the opening statement is that never has this organization been so informed as to what it needs to do. For all of these recommendations, it has consulted internally, quite intensively, but also externally. It knows what it has to do if it wants to do this. It knows what it needs to do, but it needs to plan it out. It needs to know which ones are the most critical ones for culture change and then get on with those, making sure the resources are attached to them.

If committee members have ideas as to which ones are more critical, I suppose it's always a good idea to relate that information.

Mr. Bryan May: The CPCC was created in the spring of 2021 to unify and integrate all the associated culture change activities across DND and the CAF. You've talked about them in your report with regard to education and training.

In your opinion, can the CPCC help in the issue around the strategic planning outlined in the conclusion of your report?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: Yes, it can.

It's fully qualified.

• (1655)

Mr. Bryan May: Excellent.

Maybe elaborate a little bit about why you feel that way.

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: It's because it is the functional authority now on culture change and professional conduct. It's its job.

At the same time, there are all these other organizations within the larger department that have things to say about it. However, somebody has to lay out a plan.

Mr. Bryan May: Can you tell us very quickly who, in your opinion—which senior leader within the CAF—should be responsible for developing that strategic plan?

Ms. Jocelyne Therrien: I believe that the CPCC is currently drafting it and that it will go straight up to the top.

Mr. Bryan May: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. May.

That brings our second round of questioning to a close.

On behalf of the committee, Madame Therrien, I want to thank you. I particularly want to thank you for your flexibility on time constraints, but you've been around this place for quite a while, and you appreciate that things don't always work according to clocks.

I anticipate that we will see you again, possibly around the release of your second report.

With that, again, thank you.

Colleagues, we can go two ways here. We can suspend and go in camera or....Let's put it this way. We have three things to talk about. We have the travel. We have how to incorporate the Veterans Affairs evidence. We have to pass the budget for the procurement study. I can do two out of three things in public, but maybe not the third.

The analysts tell me that they feel that they can incorporate these 27 pages of evidence that are available into their draft report. If they say they can do it, then we don't have to go in camera, and we'll save a little time.

Mr. Darren Fisher: We have to go in camera for one thing, for sure, right?

The Chair: What's that?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Didn't you say one of the three—

The Chair: We can discuss the travel in public, and we can discuss the budget in public.

Mr. James Bezan: Can we discuss the report in public?

Mr. Darren Fisher: No, we can't discuss the report in public.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Let's just go in camera, and deal—

The Chair: We will suspend and go in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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