



National Defence

Deputy Minister

National Defence Headquarters  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0K2

Défense nationale

Sous-ministre

Quartier général de la Défense nationale  
Ottawa, (Ontario)  
K1A 0K2

The Honourable John Williamson  
Chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Williamson,

As agreed upon in the Government Response to the 61<sup>st</sup> Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts entitled *Report 5, Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour – Canadian Armed Forces, of the fall 2018 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada*, National Defence submits its final response to Recommendation 2.

Sincerely,

Bill Matthews

Enclosures: 1

## **Response to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts' Report 5, Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour – Canadian Armed Forces, of the fall 2018 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada**

### **Recommendation 2**

*That, by 30 April 2020, the Canadian Armed Forces present the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts with a report outlining A) the implementation of the new national approach to victim support to ensure that it fully addresses the needs of any member who is affected by inappropriate sexual behaviour; and B) how it ensures that members have access to a consistent level of service and specialized support regardless of where they are serving.*

### **Background**

National Defence has undertaken a number of important initiatives to improve support services for serving and former military members who have been affected by sexual misconduct since its last update to the Committee in December 2021. In response to the Auditor General's report, National Defence committed to developing a national approach to victim support that addressed the needs of members affected by inappropriate sexual behaviour and ensured that members have access to a consistent level of service and specialized support. National Defence has continued this work through the expansion of the Response and Support Coordination (RSC) program delivered by the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre (SMRC), the implementation of the Declaration of Victims Rights into the Code of Service Discipline within the *National Defence Act*, and by moving forward with recommendations provided by external reports, including the Independent External Comprehensive Review (IECR, i.e. Arbour Report). Taken together, these initiatives constitute National Defence's strategy to support victims of inappropriate sexual behaviour.

### **Update on Support Services to those Affected by Sexual Misconduct**

Since its debut, the RSC program has ensured that those affected by sexual misconduct have access to ongoing support and assistance from a dedicated coordinator, from the time they contact the SMRC until they withdraw from the program.

In June 2022, National Defence announced the regional expansion of the RSC program beyond the National Capital Region (NCR) to two regions (Quebec and Pacific) and confirmed that work is underway to staff the remaining regions (Atlantic, Prairies, and Ontario) following additional funding commitments received under Budget 2021. RSC coordinators in the National Capital Region (NCR) also provide support services to all Defence Team members stationed outside the country. These RSC coordinators will continue to provide services and support to individuals, in the official language of their choice, no matter where they are in Canada or abroad, until the program is fully operational across the country.

The SMRC has also recently expanded its services to include former Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members, Department of National Defence (DND) Public Servants and military families. It continues to enhance support by developing new programs for those affected by sexual misconduct, such as a peer support program and an Independent Legal Assistance program, as well as by increasing access through virtual means. This ensures a national approach to victim support which both fully addresses the needs of former and serving CAF members and DND

Public Servants who are affected by inappropriate sexual behaviour, and provides access to a consistent level of service and specialized support regardless of their location.

### **Implementing the Declaration of Victims Rights**

In June 2022, the remaining provisions of [\*An Act to Amend the National Defence Act and to Make Related and Consequential Amendments to Other Acts\*](#) (formerly known as Bill C-77) came into force, including implementing the Declaration of Victims Rights. The Declaration includes the right to information, protection, participation and restitution, and the availability of Victim Liaison Officers to help victims of service offences navigate the Military Justice System and assist them in obtaining and transmitting to the victim information that the victim has requested and to which the victim has a right under the Declaration of Victims Rights.

### **Holistic Implementation of Culture Change Recommendations**

On October 25, 2021, National Defence established the External Comprehensive Review Implementation Committee (ECRIC). The Committee is co-chaired by the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff and the Judge Advocate General.

The Committee is responsible for developing and overseeing a plan to implement the recommendations from former Justice Fish, former Justice Deschamps, and other external reviews including most recently the Independent External Comprehensive Review. This work is complemented by that of the Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC). CPCC has been supporting the review of all external recommendations and the integration of the Declaration of Victims Rights into the Code of Service Discipline within the *National Defence Act*.

Additionally, on December 13, 2022, the Minister of National Defence tabled a Report to Parliament on Culture Change Reforms in response to former Supreme Court Justice Arbour's recommendations. This report details a wide range of culture change imperatives, including to address the need for consistent, national support services for victims of sexual misconduct. Minister Anand also appointed Madame Jocelyne Therrien as External Monitor to monitor the Defence team's efforts to implement the remaining recommendations.

### **Future Updates on Progress towards the Consistent Provision of Victim Services**

We trust that this update concludes National Defence reporting requirements on the implementation of Recommendation 2 from Public Accounts' Report 5, Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour – Canadian Armed Forces, of the fall 2018 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada.

Following the tabling of the Report to Parliament on Culture Change Reforms in response to IECR, the Minister of National Defence has committed to providing regular reports to stakeholders on the implementation of external review recommendations. The External Monitor will also be providing regular and transparent updates to the Canadian public starting in April 2023. Should the Committee wish to receive a more detailed report on National Defence's progress specific to Recommendation 2 in the future, we remain available to provide further information upon request.