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Chair

Mrs. Karen Vecchio

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• (0850)

[English]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC)): Good morning. Welcome to the 141st meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Today's meeting is in public.

Today, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, June 19, 2018, we will commence our study on the treatment of women within the Department of National Defence.

For this, I am pleased to welcome Danielle Dewitt, as an individual; and from the LGBT Purge Fund, Michelle Douglas, Chair; and Martine Roy, President. She is joining us by video conference from Montreal, Quebec.

I'm now going to turn the floor over to Danielle. You have seven minutes.

Ms. Danielle Dewitt (As an Individual): Good morning.

My name is Danielle Dewitt. I'm currently serving in National Defence. I've been in for 14 years. I came out as transgender when I was deployed overseas, surprisingly, and was roughly removed from a ship in Germany.

One of the first times I came aboard and left the ship.... I found that it was very hard from the other side now, trying to be the teacher and the student at the same time. Being one of the first ones out as transgender had a big effect on things. It was a very big eye-opener, going from the male side to the female side, seeing all the discrimination on the male side, and how much it actually did affect all of the female members.

There was some verbal abuse toward me when I was first coming out, which acted as a means for them to remove me from all ships. As an active serving navy member, that was a very big blow to my psyche. They threw me in an office, to help me transition properly.

Even in the office, I was verbally abused—not by my co-workers, but by people coming in to do regular business. I told my chain of command what had happened, and my chain of command said, “This happens all the time.”

We have a program called Operation Honour. It's not working a hundred per cent. Female members have made complaints and inquiries. Once the investigations are done, investigators decide that there's no actual harm done.

The most recent one was when I was sent to Victoria, and put back on the ships. During fleet navigation-officer training, when I was in charge of training officers, I was degraded. I was crying every night, because they didn't have any respect for anybody who was transgender. I brought this up to my chain of command, and during their investigation, nothing was done—just a slap on the wrist for everybody involved in this.

I talked to other females in my unit—there are only three of us—and all of us said the same thing. Operation Honour has not worked. It has actually failed. There is a long way to go before we can continue going further.

I'm sorry. I'm very nervous.

The Chair: Take your time. It's all good.

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: What needs to happen.... The treatment I see of women is very poor. I was given the position of senior boatswain on board my ship. It was taken away from me, and given to a male. Even though I proved to be a really good sailor, this person was told, “You're now in charge of the ship.” I was up on the high horse, and then brought down almost immediately, due to their timing.

Their excuse was that the other person had been in this unit longer, even though I have 14 years in the military, and that person only has six. They were using that as the excuse, but I felt deeply that it was because I was female. I was putting complaints against people left, right and centre for mistreating me as a transgendered female. I felt that I was being discriminated against. I brought this up and, once again, nothing happened. I still fight to this day to get my position back, and to this day, I don't have it back.

With all the negative effects on the LGBT community in the military, I have now been taken off the boats, once again, due to mental distress. I was told that if I died, I'd be buried as a male, because my chromosomes don't match.

Nothing was done to the member. It hasn't been a very fun time.

As for the treatment of the women inside, I've noticed the same thing. I've talked to other females, and they have noticed that positions have been given away to their male counterparts.

There was a ship that was completely female—the whole deck department, which is all boatswains. They tried that for a time. That no longer exists. I don't know why that ended, but maybe everybody got posted out, or whatever.

That's pretty much all I have.

•(0855)

The Chair: Danielle, thank you so much, and thanks for opening up.

Michelle and Martine, you were invited as two separate witnesses, so you each have seven minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Michelle Douglas (Chair, LGBT Purge Fund): Thank you for inviting me here today.

[English]

I'm a veteran. I'm a 30-year public servant. Currently, I'm employed by the Department of Justice here in Ottawa. I'd like to simply make it clear that I'm speaking in my own personal capacity and on behalf of the LGBT Purge Fund.

I am a very interested observer of the Canadian Armed Forces, and I'll explain why. I served in the Canadian Armed Forces as an officer between 1986 and 1989. I was an officer in the security branch, which is like the military police branch, and I had hoped to make it my career. I was off to a very good start. I was the top graduate of every military class and course I ever took. However, a long career was not meant to be.

Following multiple brutal, intense interrogations and police investigations, I was purged from the military in 1989 under the classification of being "not advantageously employable due to homosexuality". This was despite the fact that I was a loyal, hard-working and excellent service member.

My subsequent legal challenge against the Canadian Armed Forces and its codified form of discrimination in 1992 was directly responsible for the formal ending of Canada's ban on LGBT service members, and I haven't stopped fighting since.

I feel that it's an obligation of mine to keep an eye on the military to ensure that it lives up to the best of its promise. As we see today and as I've just heard in witness testimony from Danielle, that's not quite the case.

I'll tell you some of my observations. Of course, I don't intend to speak for lesbians or transgender service members, but I do think that it's helpful for you to hear about some of the evolution in policy and changes made over the 30 years.

By and large, I believe that the military's policy regarding inclusion, particularly towards women—both cisgender women and transgender women—is actually quite good. The military has, of course, all of the things that they must have: pay parity, access to career paths, family support and so on. The establishment of the sexual misconduct response centre is a good thing and so was the establishment of Operation Honour.

Now what we know, though, is that policy is vital, but practice counts.

I recently read all four editions of the progress reports on Operation Honour. What you'll see is something quite interesting when you dig into the details. They gloss over, for example, any of the activities that need to be focused on LGBT issues, although in her report in 2015, Madam Deschamps clearly stressed that women

and LGBT people needed special attention. The last report is completely silent on the military's activities for LGBT people. The last time a progress report addressed them was in 2016.

Generally, I think the military should actually be commended for some of its leadership in the pursuit of an open, diverse and truly inclusive military. In this way, we stand in stark contrast to most of the rest of the world. For example, just last month, I was in Washington, D.C. where I attended a rally in support of transgender service members in the U.S. armed forces. Of course, you see people who are capable, loyal, brave and committed to the service of their country. However, through a tweet in 2017, their commander-in-chief simply said that they are not accepted or allowed "to serve in any capacity in the U.S. [armed forces]."

In contrast, here in Canada mere hours after that 2017 tweet, I personally took enormous comfort from seeing Minister Sajjan's tweet—no doubt it was coincidental in timing—that simply reinforced that all Canadians "of all sexual orientations and gender identities" are welcome to serve, with an enthusiastic "Join us!" at the end. He's right about that. That's supportive.

•(0900)

Having spent a fair bit of time with active duty military personnel in military facilities recently, including, for example, NDHQ and CFB Moose Jaw, my sense is that progress towards inclusion is actually getting much better. I saw this is a matter of leadership. I thought it sincere and not just for show. As we can see, there are still real gaps, though, to be addressed.

I visited CFB Moose Jaw and talked about LGBT history and was invited to speak with the colonel of the base, that's the 15 Wing commander, who aired the film *The Fruit Machine*, chronicling the story of Canada's shameful purge history. In his opening remarks, Colonel O'Reilly made it clear he would never tolerate discrimination of misconduct on his base and would drive out those who couldn't adhere to those rules of respect. He said he likes to adhere to those rules of respect. He said he likes to think of it as another form of purge if there is intolerance. I'm not sure I like that word used too much in that context, but nevertheless his sentiment was right.

Zero tolerance policies, of course, tend to be aspirational. The military is not unique in this regard. But the culture and environment there means it's among the most vigilant places to do everything they can to support those policies. Work in supporting these policies needs to be innovative, effective and constant if there's a hope of being a greater employer for the 15% or so of the military who are women.

The military should continue to be pushed at all levels to set up positive space campaigns, LGBT working groups and pride networks. Women who are part of the LGBT community need these resources. Service members need a place to go that's safe to seek advice and guidance on how to engage with or be supportive of colleagues who are LGBT who may be transitioning, non-binary or part of the LGBT community. We know these places exist but only in a few bases, so if the indication from leadership is that they're across the military and this is widely embraced, it's just not the case. They can do much better in this regard.

Wrapping up, I'd like to talk a little bit about training. It's imperative not just for new recruits, but at every level. Officers and everyone else need to be part of the foundational support that's given around effective diversity and respectful workplace training policies.

Soldiers today need to know about their history. It was only 30 years ago—everyone here remembers where they were 30 years ago—that the military was purging LGBT service members. The history needs to be shared if we're ever to live up to what the Prime Minister recently said in 2017, which is that he's committed to never letting this happen again. LGBT service members need to be an integrated part of all of the diversity and equality strategies. Seeking input from the community should be embraced and deliberately sought out. Feedback has to be integrated from people to whom it matters most.

In closing, I'd like to let the committee know that your next witness, Madam Martine Roy, and I are working together on some of these reconciliation measures through the administration of a \$15-million to \$25-million fund here in Canada. We're going to be doing some incredible things like supporting the military in their training. We're also going to be building a national monument in the national capital region to acknowledge the purge period and for LGBT people. We're collecting historical documents so that we know why some of these policies happen. We want to be part of the solution in making Canada a more inclusive and diverse place, but particularly for the public service, military and RCMP.

● (0905)

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much, Michelle.

We're now going to turn it over to the video conference. We have Martine Roy.

Martine, you have seven minutes.

Ms. Martine Roy (President, LGBT Purge Fund): Thank you for having me.

[*Translation*]

My name is Martine Roy. Right now, I work for TD Bank in LGBTQI business development. I want to say this because it is important; it is a new role. However, I am not here to talk about this role.

[*English*]

Today I'm here to represent the LGBT Purge as the president. Michelle Douglas presented it well. I won't go back to what happened, because the same thing happened to me. I was in the regular forces and I was arrested, interrogated and let go for homosexuality.

[*Translation*]

When I was in the army, in training at Borden, everything was highly sexualized. The access to the outside, the really inexpensive alcohol and the group effect made the place perfect for this sort of aggression.

There are those who have just arrived, the recruits. People who have been in the army for a long time and away from their families come for their training and find themselves in the same place as the recruits. Something needs to be done about that. I hear that it is still happening in the same places.

The next point I want to make is important to me. The first letter in "LGBT" is "L". It represents women. In any organization, we women must take our place, because things are unfair right from the get-go. Since there are far fewer women than men, things are unfair. This creates an imbalance and undermines respect for women.

[*English*]

For me, this is important because we just heard from somebody who went through a transition. I think she witnessed being a white man and then becoming a woman. She is not transsexual for me anymore. She's a woman. I think that to understand what it meant to be a white cisgender male at the top of his line and then to become a woman, she must have felt the discrimination.

I am here in front of you, yes, to talk about LGBT, but mostly to talk about women. I think this is the subject. Why is it that in a lot of industry—I'm not just talking about the military—we still have this issue in 2019? When a woman can go into combat and when we know that woman can do as much as man, why don't we achieve that respect, so that we don't get aggression anymore?

I've brought to my paper a lot of research about how aggression is still happening today in the Canadian Armed Forces. I may be less positive than my colleague, Michelle Douglas, over what's happening because I have a feeling, when I look at numbers—and it's the same for Danielle, the first person who spoke—that we are still having major issues.

It's like in 1969 when we decriminalized homosexuality, it didn't stop there. It's not because there's a law or a policy in place, and all the officers are embracing that policy, that in the rank or in the platoon this is understood.

My colleague brought to us the fact of *The Fruit Machine*. We're going around with that movie where people testify what happened to them and we realize it has a great impact. I think we need to go into the ranks. We need to go inside. I believe that, after all the investigation—and I pulled the numbers but I'm not going to bring them all to you because I think you do understand and this is why we're sitting in front of you today—there is still an issue and we need to find some resolution to it.

● (0910)

I worked for about 30 years in different corporations after I was fired, and I can tell you that it's not, as I said, just in the Canadian Armed Forces. But I think if we can really find the right way to go inside and give training and education to people like this, ignorance won't keep happening. When everybody knows, they can't tell you that they didn't know. Everybody takes ownership.

When we talk about allies, they're not just heterosexual. Allies are lesbian. They're homosexual. They're transsexual. We need to be allies for each other and we need to have allies outside as well. If everybody would embrace diversity and inclusion and understand that in the workplace, the most important thing is your skill, how much you will achieve in your job, how good you are at your work and how much you will want to stay there, we would have good retention and we would attract the best talent. As the workplace takes up 75% of our time, I think it's a place where we have to show our skill, be able to be in collaboration, and respect each other.

I was really saddened by the number I saw. I was really saddened to see that we're still doing that. As a woman and a lesbian, I can tell you that there are still a lot of issues of respect toward the gender of women and toward the gender of women transsexuals and bisexuals. There are still some issues of respect, and we need some help.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Thank you so much.

We'll start off our first round of questioning with Bob Bratina.

Bob, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thank you all for being here. In full disclosure, I will note that my sister was in the military from the early seventies. She retired after a full tour. She was also one of the first women to be sent to an extreme posting, which at the time was Alert. I have to tell you that she's proud to have served the country, but she's never gone into a lot of detail about the issues she may have faced in those times.

First of all, Danielle, you were obviously treated very poorly. You made comments about Operation Honour, about it not working and so on. In business over the years we learn that the first step in solving a problem is to admit that you have a problem.

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: Correct.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Do you think we've admitted to a full enough extent that we have a problem that we're trying to deal with?

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: In the military aspect, I don't believe so.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Why is that?

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: Once a year in the military we have to do a mandatory Operation Honour slide show—literally—at which people fall asleep. The higher-ups think this is all working, but when it comes to the lower ranks—for example, my rank as a leading seaman or corporal—they're not getting it. There are some who do and there are some who don't. We've mentioned before that there's been a problem in the Operation Honour system. I've told my chain of command that there's a problem with this. They've said, "Okay, okay, okay...", which is all I've been getting since the very beginning of Operation Honour.

Mr. Bob Bratina: We don't want to think that we will put in something that's mere lip service, or just to say, well, there, we have the operation going. So how do we address the specifics of that?

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: One thing that needs to be done is to have more education about Operation Honour. I do believe it is a good system, but I do believe there are a lot of flaws in it. It is a double-edged sword, shall we say, when it comes to the victim versus the assault... I can't remember the name of the guy. The investigations are done well after the incident happens, and most people have forgotten all the wording used about it.

When it does come time for a punishment to be laid down against whomever, it is very lacking. The last person—I'm not going to use the name—when this incident last came up was given a slap on the wrist, in my opinion. I had someone bring an Operation Honour claim against me that was unwarranted, and I got a more severe

punishment for something that was a bad conversation that didn't include anything sexual or anything about gender.

●(0915)

Mr. Bob Bratina: Thank you for those comments.

Michelle, let me put to you the question of recruiting and screening of recruits. Is there something there that could be advantageous to the issue we're facing?

Ms. Michelle Douglas: I think that tone-setting at the earliest opportunity from the Canadian Armed Forces is absolutely vital. As part of the recruitment process and some of the early indications.... I think that there is not only the expression of the exciting part of the military, which obviously is a point of appeal at the moment of recruitment, but in terms of the standards, there's the indication of the expectation of compliance with the regulations around misconduct, and highlighting them at the earliest opportunity is vital.

I think that's part of it, because people need to know what they're getting into. If they can't comport themselves, if they can't respect the rules and what the standards are, then really... They either have to sign up and be fully committed or that's not the place for them.

I think the leadership of the military is actually quite sincerely committed, from everything I've seen and heard. I believe them, and I am not, on these things, inclined to be giving trust easily. The people I've talked to are invested in making this work. As you know, I think the early steps around codifying these things—around the rules and the definitions of misconduct—that's the vital stuff that is happening, and it's one of the conditions for change that Danielle is talking about that needs to happen.

Yes, I would say that you're going to also retain the recruits you keep if you create an open, harassment-free work environment.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Right.

Ms. Michelle Douglas: Weed out those who can't conform to it.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Madam Roy, in my radio talk show days, it was back in the 1980s that the debate was going on as to whether women should be allowed to be in combat. I knew a number of elderly ladies who had served in Israel, Russia and Greece and who had no problem operating in combat.

Looking back to the example of the Tuskegee airmen, the black squadron in the American Air Force, do you think we should have a squadron of women to go out there and show what they can do in a completely female context?

Ms. Martine Roy: Maybe not to that degree, but I think we need to elevate women's roles in the Canadian Armed Forces. I think it goes with example and as well, as I say, with respect.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Yes.

Ms. Martine Roy: It's the way we're going to give the roles. When I see a woman, I'm wondering how many women are teaching the men. I think that a lot of times the men are going to teach the men and the women are going to teach the women. It should be at the same level, with the women being able to teach all platoons.

Mr. Bob Bratina: Right.

Ms. Martine Roy: I agree with that at the recruit level. I think at the recruit level it is important, but also, all along. A lot of the time, we think that it's the onboarding. We give all the dos and don'ts in the onboarding, but then it goes, and we never come back to it. We never talk about it. I think that at every moment, at every transition and in every new platoon, it should be brought back. It should be a top point. It should be "part of".

The way we see it is that LGBT is not a social group, and women are not a little social group on the side. It's part of the business. It's part of the core. If you're going to have women in the military, the military will not be the same. It has to be seen as being the core of it. As important and as valuable as a man can be, a woman can be to the same level.

I think we're trying, because I see that are camps and there are 10-day trials and things like that, so it brings in women to go. Those are nice initiatives, I think.

I do agree with Michelle. I did meet some captains, one who started the diversity-plus group—LGBT—for the Canadian Armed Forces. That's a good initiative, because then that group gets everybody. Hats off: the captains, the privates and the adjutants. They're all together for a better cause. You have, inside your troops, people working on it. That would be a great thing if that could grow. I think it could help.

• (0920)

Mr. Bob Bratina: Thank you.

The Chair: We're now going to turn it over to Rachael Harder, for seven minutes.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): To each and every one of you, thank you so much for taking the opportunity to be here and for being willing to share parts of your story.

Danielle, you certainly shared a compelling account with regard to your experiences within the military thus far—as did all of you.

Perhaps each of you could answer my question. Each of you has experienced different instances of discrimination and ill treatment within the Canadian Armed Forces, yet each of you has remained engaged to various extents, so there's a degree of tenacity that's being demonstrated there. There's commitment, there's passion, there's drive. There's a desire for change. Perhaps you could explain that a little further as to why you remain committed to this endeavour.

Maybe we could start with Danielle, then go to Michelle and continue.

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: One of the main reasons I still continue to serve is because I love the job. I also hope people come out to the units. When I did go back into the office environment for five years, I started the positive space group in Halifax, Nova Scotia, with three other lovely women. It got so successful that Ottawa took it over. Now it's a nationwide project.

Within those five years, I helped over 50 trans people come out to their units. I helped the medical system reform itself. I've seen a lot of changes. I've seen a lot of good stuff come out of this. I've helped anybody in the LGBT community. I've become the positive space in my own group. Anybody from across the unit knew exactly who I was and could come and talk to me at any given time.

I got over to Esquimalt, and in Esquimalt there was no positive space; there was no LGBT working group. I have since started one, and I've only been there since August.

My goal is to make this a very inclusive military. I know I have the support of the captain of the base, captain (navy), so I know I have all the support I need, including from my own chain of command, to make this get off the ground running. So far, it has been working successfully.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Cool.

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: I've noticed that people have changed a lot of their ways. The problem is that there's still odd one in the military who doesn't believe anybody who is LGBT should be working, or they're scared of "Oh, you're going to look at me the wrong way" or "Ooh, this is going to happen".

However, no, I just love it.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Awesome. Thank you.

Michelle.

Ms. Michelle Douglas: Fundamentally, I'm a supporter of the Canadian Armed Forces. They matter to our country. I believe they uphold the best values of our country, and I appreciate the sacrifice, dedication and commitment of people who serve their country in this way.

I wanted to be one of them for a long time. It didn't work out. If invited to go back and serve my country in the military, I would not do it. Now I'm too old.

However, my service to this country can come in other ways. One of the ways I am doing that, and in fact, have done for the last 30 years, is to be an ever-present voice to try to make sure the military is upholding the values that they claim to.

Inclusion doesn't work if people don't feel included. Diversity, if it's only a matter of rhetoric and concept, isn't enough. I just think, as a Canadian who is interested, it's my duty to keep pushing.

The nice thing is that when you measure it over the course of some 30 years, you do see change. You see that it's getting better. I'm an optimist. Even though the military changed my life and humiliated me at times, I'm still trying to serve in a different way and make them a better organization.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Michelle, if I may say before continuing on to Martine, we missed out when you were removed. Thank you for your dedication to service despite that.

• (0925)

Ms. Michelle Douglas: It was a sad time. Thank you very much.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Martine.

Ms. Martine Roy: Thank you. This is a very good question and for me, like Michelle, that was horrible to go through. My whole life changed and one day... It took me 10 years to find work that I felt good in, and it took me 10 years to take a risk, and that was to go work for a very big corporation. I did, and when I found out they were inclusive and all that, I said, "Here we go, I have to tell everybody", and that's how I started Pride at Work Canada in 2008.

It was my way to say that what happened to me, I don't want to happen to anybody else at any work, because I don't think it should. In creating Pride at Work Canada, I started with eight companies. There are now 120 companies, and my goal was to get the Canadian Armed Forces to join, which they did in 2016. That's why I'm so engaged, but at the same time, I was feeling at one point that what I was saying did not fit with what I was doing, because I accepted that I was thrown out of the Canadian Armed Forces, and I didn't do anything.

That's why I had to do the class action. I had to settle this, and not for only me. When I discovered there were others like me, like Michelle, and there were many of us, it gave me more reason to fight and to say that we cannot go on and say that we're a country of peace, that we're innovators with diversity and all that if we don't clean up our space, and we needed to clear that. We needed to first admit we did it, because no one ever did, and then apologize for it, which we just did. Now we repair, and all those are great things. This is why I'm still in front of you today and I'm still debating that, because I believe we can make it. I believe we can be that inclusive country and that we can teach others. I believe that.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

The Chair: We're now moving on to Irene Mathysen.

Irene, you have the floor for seven minutes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses. Your determination is inspiring, truly, and so is your courage. I also want to say thank you for your service.

I'm going to start with Danielle. You talked about what happened or what didn't happen when you reported through the chain of command. I'm wondering, from your perspective, what should have happened?

You also made reference to the fact that it was a slap on the wrist, and there didn't seem to be any record or understanding of what you had reported. Could you please explain that to me? It seems odd to me that there wouldn't at least be a paper trail.

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: For the most part, when it comes to Operation Honour, it's dealt with inside the unit itself. I can't report much more on it because the investigation is still ongoing. Once I found out what they were originally going to give this member, I grieved it very very heavily and severely, and it has now gone to the next level where the captain of Esquimalt will be looking into it more deeply.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: You talked about the slide show, the Operation Honour annual exercise, and it sounded like checking boxes.

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: Yes.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Is that what it is?

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: In my opinion, that's what it is. I've talked to other people, and everybody knows what Operation Honour is, but for the most part, a lot of people, when it first came out, kept saying, "Oh, it's hop on her", i.e. Op Honour. Comments are always being made that this is now a very fake thing. Units took advantage

of that, and so they made it Operation Honour. We cannot use the short-form version of the name anymore.

They do it every year, or every unit is supposed to. The problem is that a lot of units are not all available, so not everybody's there, and when they do it, it's part of a PD day, shall we say, and it's done midday, so people are already getting tired, hungry or cranky, and I don't believe people are paying full attention to what it is about, and those who do pay attention have heard it so many times that it's now getting dry.

One of the biggest things I've realized is that they don't really publish too much to everybody of what's going on with the Operation Honour side of it. What was the outcome? We don't need to know the full story of what happened, but what was the outcome of this Operation Honour investigation?

Due to the fact that it's in-unit most of the time, you'll never know. The two parties involved never tell anybody what's going on, because they want to keep it as low as they can and not have it spreading around, but let's face it: a navy ship is like a high school. A rumour starts, and in five seconds it's all around the whole ship, so we try to keep it low.

• (0930)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I was going to ask you about women aboard ship. You're at close quarters, far away from a port. Have you any recommendations in regard to how you look after the safety of the women and the trans members of the crew?

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: Well, right now the navy is the only one that still segregates the sleeping quarters. In the army and air force, I believe, they all share the same tent. When it comes to their heads and wash places, they're separate, segregated as well, and rightfully so. In the navy, the females have their own mess and their own heads and wash places, which are kept separate from the remainder of the ship. The problem is that, on the ship I'm on, which is an Orca-class vessel—which is a very small vessel—being a senior boatswain mate, I always get thrown down in the bottom instead of having my own cabin, because they refuse to segregate, or refuse to.... "Comess" is the best way to put it.

But women on ship are usually treated very poorly, which I've seen specifically, since 95% of my time has been served on ships. Because they're always segregated, when the doors are closed and they're not near the female messes, the men start talking. And specifically, I hate to say it, but when it's that time of the month and all of the women are pretty much synched up after a six-month deployment, every man stays away from that area. But they always make fun of it and they always verbally attack a lot of the females behind their backs when they're out of earshot.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Okay. Thank you.

Madame Douglas, I think in 2015 Madame Deschamps came to this committee and talked about how hopeful she was about Operation Honour. But here we are, five years later, and it doesn't feel as if we've made a lot of progress.

You talked about only a few safe places, in terms of the bases. What stands in the way of making every base, every installation, a safe place, right across the board?

Ms. Michelle Douglas: I don't know if there's actually a systemic reason. I think there seem to be some people on bases who I'm talking to and who would like to set them up, so it's probably a matter of leadership.

I think support from political leadership within the military, to just simply make it a practical thing that they must implement, is a good thing. The military is very good at carrying out orders when given. So if there's reinforcement at the highest political levels, for example from the minister to the chief of the defence staff, it's going to be so.

I think there are gaps. I know that's the case. We can do better. That's an important way to have people feel more included, that they can therefore have some standing on a base, so that maybe the leader of that particular group could go to a base commander if there are things that are not being addressed as fully or as well as might be hoped.

That's actually a fast, tangible way to bring real change.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you.

Madame Roy, you talked about the need for balance, more women in the military. What do you think are the main barriers to recruiting and retaining women who are lesbian, gay, transgender, two-spirit? What is the issue here in regard to why they don't come to the military and why they don't stay?

Ms. Martine Roy: I think there's still skepticism about how they're going to be treated. I think fear is still there. Exactly that: you go from one base to the other and it's not the same. You just talked about Madame Deschamps. Madame Deschamps just talked again, four years later, right? She's saying that, for her, she still doesn't see the global strategy. She still doesn't see that it's everywhere.

There are things that we need to highlight that we change. Maybe it's not communicated enough that we have those programs that women can just go and try for 10 days. I didn't know about it. Maybe there's more recruitment we need to do—young people at university or events. I never saw the Canadian Armed Forces at an event where I go for recruitment of new talent. That would be interesting.

As well, they need to be more aligned toward women. What is it that women like? We know what men like. What is it that women like? Me, I know I was a medical assistant because I like to help. I know that, as a woman, I like to help. That was one of the roles I chose in the army. That was the first role I chose in the army. What else could we highlight that are those really specific roles that women would like to do in the army? When I see publicity, it talks a lot about the combat, about all those things. Maybe we should talk a little bit more about something that women would see themselves in. We have to see ourselves; it has to reflect ourselves, I find.

For me, the army is like a big corporation. It's the same thing. It needs to go everywhere, to every base. Everybody has to embrace it. There should be a quality person who goes around and verifies. We laugh about those ISO 9000s—it's the same thing, a bit.

Sorry.

● (0935)

The Chair: It's all good. You gave such a great testimony.

Mrs. Zahid, you have seven minutes.

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to all three of you for coming out today. Thank you for your courage and determination, and being a daughter and sister of armed forces people. Thank you for your service to our country.

My first question is to Ms. Douglas, and perhaps everyone could comment.

We have all seen that society has evolved greatly over the years on the LGBT issues and women's equality. Has the culture changed at the Royal Military College? Is the next generation of officers and the recruitments coming with some new attitudes? Is there appropriate training at the entry level reinforcing that? How can we support that?

Ms. Michelle Douglas: My experience in knowing precisely how these young women, in particular at RMC and other feeder organizations, will form the officer cadre is not as current as it might be, so I would just indicate that.

We know the condition of young women now, particularly going to university, hold many expectations. They're smart and dynamic, and have a sense of their own place in advancing organizations. That, combined with some educational training on recent history, provides the grounding for actually having quite a progressive armed forces leadership cadre emerging. We're already seeing it now.

There is the expression that it's tough to teach an old dog new tricks. I don't mean to analogize anyone, only to say that people who have been grounded in tradition and people who have been grounded in dated thinking actually can be retrained to be quite progressive and real leaders in this new environment.

That's what we need to see from our current military leadership. They'll be supported and encouraged, and frankly, it will be insisted upon by those who are coming in from the military institutions, like RMC.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: We need to build a more inclusive and diverse Canadian Armed Forces.

Ms. Michelle Douglas: Absolutely.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: What can we do to build that?

Ms. Michelle Douglas: That's about recruiting. That's about seeing yourself serving your country. The idea that we're a diverse military has a long way to go. Women only make up 15% of the Canadian Armed Forces. We need more diversity, just like in all walks of Canadian life. In terms of the military institutions, like RMC, I just don't know enough about what it is they're doing now to really be of assistance to you.

● (0940)

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Ms. Dewitt, would you like to add anything?

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: I can't really explain too much on the RMC side of it, but I do see officers on a daily basis, as my job is to train officers. I'm usually their first interaction with an LGBT member in the trans world, and they're all usually shocked and amazed, "Oh my God, there's a trans person on this boat. What do I do?"

I teach them. What we've discussed with HMCS *Venture*, the people who train the officers on shore, is that I would be going in to talk to them every so often, to give them more of an introduction before they actually get to the ship, where they have to work with me directly.

My last knowledge of it is that there's actually a major...There are two majors, Major Foss, and I don't remember the other major's name. The other major works at RMC. The officers who come in from RMC should have some knowledge of a transgender member.

Once again, it all starts with recruiting. I have several friends who wanted to join the armed forces. I contacted the recruiting centre to find out what they needed to do to get in as transgender members, and it had no idea. The recruitment centre had no idea how to treat transgender members, even if they're allowed to join while they're still transitioning.

In talking to them, they have to be physically and medically transitioned first before they can join the military. I don't know if that's policy. I don't know what's going on, because I haven't been able to find any documentation that says otherwise. Either you stop your transition, do basic training, and then medically transition or you medically transition and then join the military.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Ms. Roy, would you like to add something?

Ms. Martine Roy: Yes. That's interesting. I met one of the new officers I'm working with and I talked with him. I saw that we assume because they're millennial, they're younger, they're bringing better baggage and they're more inclusive. It's not true. Some are, yes, but others, no. I think it's always the power of the group, the power of the platoon and the power of "What are the other ones going to think?" Sometimes that is what fouls everything up. Maybe you come from a very inclusive family and you were brought up this way and all that, but then you end up in a group of people who don't see it that way.

In the army a lot of the time, you're not going to say or do something because you're scared of being judged by the others. That's one of the issues I find. We need to undo that—to undo the power that it creates from the get-go, from the beginning. I think, yes, if we can train our new officers and make sure we touch every one of them and we ensure that if they end up in the same boat, or they end up being directed by a lesbian or by a transsexual, they will respond well.

At the end of the day, I think it's all a question of training.

The Chair: I'm just looking at the clock. I'm totally fascinated. I would like to just allow one question per group so that everybody gets another question.

Salma, do you want to decide who gets the next question?

Rachael, I'm going to give you the floor for one question. Let's keep it succinct—two minutes if possible.

Mrs. Salma Zahid: Emmanuella.

The Chair: Emmanuella.

We'll have Rachael, Emmanuella and then Irene. Let's keep it succinct. Good luck.

Ms. Rachael Harder: I address one question to all of you.

If you were to give us one recommendation each, what would be your top recommendation for change within the Canadian Armed Forces?

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: I would recommend better training, getting the LGBT issues dealt with at a basic training level or at the RMC level.

Ms. Michelle Douglas: I would also recommend better training, recalling the history of the military with the emotions and power of that experience. Telling real people's stories makes them more relatable, and I think it holds people to a higher level of account when they're thinking about their own actions.

Also a related one, of course, is that it starts from the top. If it's ordered to be so, it'll be done and I think it'll make a difference.

● (0945)

Ms. Martine Roy: Michelle, it's sad but I would go and show *The Fruit Machine* to all military. Why not go right to the point and get the action done? We know it's working, it's a good movie. It's exactly as it's shown. That's a good subject, I think.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Thank you.

The Chair: Emmanuella.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): I didn't get a chance to thank you yet. Thank you all for being here today and for the amazing testimony.

All three of you mentioned that there are policies in place, and policy is great on paper but it's not always put into effect. What are some of the ways the policies would be put into effect, like Operation Honour or even a sexual misconduct response centre? How would these be more effective tools? What would you suggest leaders do to make sure people at all ranks follow suit?

Ms. Michelle Douglas: One suggestion I might have is that they hold round tables within their sessions or town halls within units. The leaders of those units can ask for specific feedback.

I think it could be part of a rating system of accountability. If there was feedback that came from that, one hopes it would be sincerely heard. It could be reflected to their superiors, and be reflected in some of the annual reporting and assessment tools that are used. If that's done, I think you'd hear real voices on the ground reflecting their clear views and being held accountable for delivery on that through the assessment process. That might be one way to help close the gap between policy and action.

Ms. Danielle Dewitt: I definitely agree with the round table side of it, because the PowerPoint presentations just aren't working. We have been "death by PowerPoint"ed so many times in our career that it has lost its "ah" of amazement. A round table at which you actually ask questions and get people's feedback is going to be the best way to do it.

Ms. Martine Roy: I totally agree with the round table. I am going on one today at Longue-Pointe—I think that is it. The LGBTQ community has all kinds of organizations. Here in Montreal, they are asking the help of those organizations and the army to come and to make presentations.

Why not? Why not bring the outside in? It's always been something, in the army, whereby it's the army and the others are civilians. Well, I think now the civilians can come to help the army with those round tables, with presentations and with due collaboration with those organizations. There are some all over Canada.

That could be a good initiative to help out.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Awesome.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Irene, I'll pass the floor over to you for the final question.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: There was some discussion of the reconciliation fund, the investment of \$15 million to \$25 million.

You talked about training and you talked about a monument, but what does the training look like, in terms of the fund?

Madam Chair, I have a question for you. Do you think we could have a screening of *The Fruit Machine*?

The Chair: Yes, absolutely.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: I would love to hear from more of you.

Ms. Michelle Douglas: For the question regarding the LGBT Purge Fund, a \$15-million to \$25-million fund established as a measure emerging from the class action lawsuit launched by victims of the LGBT purge in Canada, it is estimated that some 9,000 people were subject to systemic discrimination between the mid-fifties and the mid-nineties. This is 9,000 Canadians touched by this form of

discrimination. Currently we are talking about fewer than 1,000 who are probably still living.

The fund will among other things look at ways to work with the public service of Canada, the RCMP and the military to hire a subject matter expert, to try to go in and to amplify some of the current training that is already on the ground for the purpose of making sure that there is meaning behind the words of inclusion and diversity; that these are not notions or concepts, but making them real.

We're just getting started. We received our first payment of \$15 million from the Government of Canada from this lawsuit only in March 2019, so we are an embryonic organization. We are working hard, working fast for quick implementation.

The good thing is that we are getting good levels and high levels of support, something we haven't always been used to. It's nice to have some money and to be able to bring training in a new and refreshed way to these organizations.

● (0950)

The Chair: Thank you.

Just to answer that question, Irene, that is how I met some of these wonderful panellists; I met Michelle Douglas through *The Fruit Machine*. We hosted it last year. I'm not sure what we'll be able to do in the next few days, but I can tell you, we can bring it to London.

Once again, I would really like to thank Danielle Dewitt, Michelle Douglas and Martine Roy for your compelling testimony at today's meeting.

We are going to suspend for a few minutes to clear out, because we have a business portion.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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