

Statement for the Roundtable on gender issues

Department of National Defence consultation on defence policy

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United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution 1325 calls on member states such as Canada to, among other things, ensure women's equal participation and full involvement in matters pertaining to peace and security. We know from quantitative data that women on average have a different perspective than men on issues of war and peace – women are less likely to support going to war than men. In order to fully reflect the views of all of the Canadian population, of which 50% are women, we must also consider perspectives and issues that are of importance to women.

Sexual violence during warfare, including by troops and peacekeepers, has been recognized as a war crime in UN Security Council Resolution 1820, with related follow-up resolutions 1888 and 1960. Sexual violence is not only problematic for women civilians during warfare, but also for women and some men in the military. Sexual violence is a crime of power in which the perpetrator thinks he has some kind of right to inflict this on the victim. Often sexual violence is tied in with ideologies of masculinity, and these are often at play within the military.

In the *External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces*, Marie Deschamps called for “comprehensive cultural change” within the CAF. In her discussions with over 700 CAF members and related professionals, she found an “underlying sexualized culture in the CAF that is hostile to women and LGBTQ members”. She also stated that “Sexual harassment and sexual assault not only harm the victims, but also the integrity, professionalism and efficiency of the CAF as a whole.” The External Review recommended addressing the difficult task of cultural change through training programs, disciplinary and military justice and victim support systems, and also that definitions of sexual “misconduct” be brought into line with Canadian sexual assault laws. The Deschamps report recommendations are not only important for the well-being and efficiency of CAF members, but I believe they are also useful for changing CAF members' approach to civilians overseas and implementing the UN Security Council resolutions. Deschamps stated that “The military ethos of the CAF is founded on respect for dignity of all persons, a principle that is embodied in CAF policies... The ERA found a disjunction, however, between the high professional standards established by the CAF's policies ... and the reality experienced by many members day-to-day.”

Respect for all persons is essential in today's warfare, including respect toward other CAF members, civilians or enemy combatants. Indigenous practices may be useful to keep in mind – sometimes you need to kill for survival, but you honour what you kill and the land that produced it. The 2015 report

Gender Mainstreaming in the Canadian Armed Forces: Benchmarking with NATO Allies and Partners recommended that professional incentives should be introduced within the CAF to promote gender-aware leadership. To me, “gender aware” is more than considering conditions for female and LGBTQ CAF members, it is an understanding of different approaches to life and conflict. I believe that such an approach would give the CAF an edge in a world in which militaries, and many nations, abide only by traditionally masculine views.

Gender awareness and sexual harassment courses for military members exist, but how many members have taken them? In addition, CAF members, including those at the lowest ranks, should have access to professional development in terms of understanding the nature of conflict, socioeconomic and geopolitical realities that fuel conflict, narratives of ethnic nationalism, religious fundamentalism and political ideologies, racism and how to deal with it, PTSD prevention and resilience, and conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques. In today’s warfare, information is an important tool.

Warfare has once again completely changed and is evolving every minute. In some cases, the “enemy” is no longer bounded by geography, ethnicity or anything else. The “enemy” can be created by ideology across communication systems. The “enemy” is no longer finite. That is why it is important to deal directly with the ideology itself and the motivation people have to become “the enemy”. It is not enough to denigrate the ideology. A pathway forward must be found for those who have come to believe.

There are two ways of approaching this on a psychological level – one is to counter the narrative in a way that the people who espouse the ideology can understand and accept. The other is a longer term strategy informed by a gendered perspective – that armed conflict is a last resort that should be used for self-defence only. In this sense, Canada can play a role on the world stage by bringing people together, promoting peace, constructive communication and conflict resolution. This has been a traditional role Canada has played, which has been greatly diminished in the past decade. The CAF can play a role in this, particularly in areas that are heavily militarized.

Pretending that the “enemy” or “hostile” is anything less than a human being can be a factor in the development of PTSD, when military members are faced with the reality of having killed or contributed to the pain of another. It is time to develop a new framework for thinking about the “enemy” and also for thinking about victory. The long-term goal is peace and prosperity for everyone.

The best case scenario is that conflicts will be resolved before they erupt in violence. The second best scenario is that conflicts are effectively and permanently contained or diminished before they can become major conflicts. This cannot be done through force alone – it must also address grievances and beliefs. The worst case scenario is becoming involved in a conflict with major loss of life and funds, but the original matter is left unresolved, or is simply festering under the surface only to erupt again at another time. The CAF may be the only experience of Canada that civilians and combatants in a given region have. In this sense, the CAF is not only serving a military function, but a diplomatic one. It is laying the groundwork for a region’s position toward Canada. It is imperative that all CAF members act in

accordance with Canadian values, and the CAF's own stated ethos. To do this, they need to be sufficiently trained to do so. Training to respect all persons, to understand where others are coming from, and to de-escalate conflict are not only useful on the ground, but can transform the CAF itself and make it a workplace that cares for and understands its own.

The perception of civilians in areas in which the CAF is deployed is important. Canada should not deploy troops unless the majority of the people want Canada there, and should continue to work in partnership with local civilian authorities and groups to ensure the safety and well-being of civilians and reparation for any deaths.

The goal is not to win, it is to create win-win scenarios. It involves changing our mindset, not just at the top but throughout the ranks. The goal is not to kill or capture and humiliate "enemies", it is to protect yourself, others and immobilize those who are trying to kill you and them. It is a different approach to warfare, one that recognizes that our actions have lasting effects on ourselves and others. When we behave honourably and with compassion, we can live with ourselves, and goodwill is created. "Enemies" cannot be defeated any longer by wiping them out. In the best case scenario, they become friends and partners, such as Germany and Japan after the Second World War. In the worst case scenario, they are beaten back only to rise again more powerful and vicious than before because the underlying psychological motivations, beliefs and conditions were never addressed. We cannot defend "our values" without abiding by our values.

Care needs to be taken about who to work with and how. The United States funded the mujahideen who fought Soviet troops in Afghanistan (1979-1989). Many of these same fighters went on later to join the Taliban. The Taliban not only subsequently became the threat, but the values of the Taliban concerning gender and other issues led to significant death and oppression of civilians. This scenario is now potentially being repeated in Syria and the surrounding area. We are living through geopolitical conditions in which war is fought by proxy with unintended consequences. We should be very careful about whom we equip and train. Training and equipping foreign fighters may be seen as the easy way out for Canada, because fewer Canadian lives are at risk. We may be choosing sides by picking the "least bad" option. And yet, depending on the political consequences, such an action may simply seed future aggression and help place into regional power actors who do not operate in keeping with values of respect for women and minorities. Where Canadians are providing military training, respect for civilians and particularly women must be an explicit part of this training.

When deciding whether or not to engage in a military mission is a key question. Canada does not have the capacity to intervene everywhere in which people may need and welcome intervention. Decisions have to be made about where to intervene and how. One question to consider is, do Canadians have the stomach to see full-scale participation in this mission, which will cost billions of dollars and during which soldiers come back in bags? Canadians whose ancestry originates in certain conflict zones can play a greater role in contributing to policy-making and explaining the situation in human terms to the public. However, the CAF must also be open to criticism. Criticism is an essential component of democracy. It is in considering criticism that we evolve and become better than we were.

The military role in emergency response is useful and welcome. The Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) not only responds to a desperate need, it creates goodwill and can build morale and experience. The CAF can and does also play a key role in large-scale emergency management situations within Canada and contributes welcome and necessary search and rescue skills to Canada. This is an appropriate use of tax dollars.

Biomedical engineer Lina Nilsson, who is Innovation Director at the Blum Center for Developing Economies at the University of California, Berkeley, found that women are more attracted than men to roles involving helping others, even in non-traditional occupations such as engineering. From a gendered perspective, emergency management activities are less stereotypical of the military and high visibility of such activities may attract more women to the CAF. The visibility of women, Indigenous people and other minority CAF members in communities may also lead a wider range of people to contemplate the possibility of a career within the military.

Most military members want to feel useful, want to feel like they are contributing something important, want to be proud of what they do. This can be hard to feel in some recent combat situations, such as in Afghanistan, where it can often be unclear what has really changed, or where military members may be in a position to accidentally negatively affect civilians. Emergency management draws on skills and courage. It involves exposure to challenge, hard physical work and the need for problem-solving and quick thinking. But the goal is clear and the outcome of intervention is usually a clear positive. This is essential for the mental health and well-being of military members.

The CAF and defence policy are at a critical juncture. Should they continue exactly as they have done even though the world around us is changing at an exponential pace? Or should the CAF and defence policy recognize current needs and conditions and transform accordingly? Transformation is necessary. So is recognizing that what has in the past been considered weaknesses associated with women – empathy and de-escalation of conflict - are actually strengths that both organizations and the whole world needs.