

Discussion Points – Canadian Defence Policy Review Public Consultation Ottawa Roundtable, July 19, 2016

By Kristine St-Pierre, Specialist on gender and peacekeeping & Steering committee member of the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada

Thank you for inviting me to contribute to public consultations to inform the development of a new defence policy for Canada and how gender perspectives can be integrated as part of this new policy. I would first like to point out that out of 93 opinion pieces as of July 6, less than five mention gender equality and/or the importance of considering the role of women in the armed forces. At best it indicates a lack of awareness of the negative impact gender inequality has on matters of national defence. At worst it points to an organizational reluctance to consider women as a key stakeholder in our national defence.

It is with this in mind that I would like to advocate for a new defence policy that places a strong emphasis on gender equality and the rights of women both within DND/CAF and as part of operations.

A strong focus on gender equality is important because:

1. **It will strengthen military organizational culture by ensuring the organization is accountable, representative, non-discriminatory, and respectful of the human rights of all.**
2. **It will have a direct impact on the effectiveness of military operations.**

The key to ensuring attention to gender perspectives in the new policy is for DND and the CAF to define how they plan on mainstreaming gender perspectives across the institutions and as part of missions. Mainstreaming gender is a key strategy for reducing inequalities between women and men. It is “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislation, policies and programmes in any area and at all levels.”¹

Many of the tools that DND/CAF should use as part of a wider Government of Canada effort to reinforce security and build stability internationally already exist. These include the [CDS Directive](#) for Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions into CAF Planning and Operations, the [NATO/EAPC Policy](#) for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on WPS and Related Resolutions, the Canadian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and the [Deschamps Report](#) on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. Taken together, these provide an important starting point for bringing attention to gender perspectives.

(While the Canadian National Action Plan on WPS expired at the end of March 2016, the Government remains committed to the agenda and to developing a new C-NAP. It will be very important that the new defence policy and new C-NAP supplement each other and work to reinforce one another.)

¹ ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions on Gender Mainstreaming, 1997
(<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF>).

Recommendations for integrating gender in a new defence policy:

1. My first recommendation is to call upon the **mainstreaming of gender perspectives within the institution itself** by:
 - Addressing sexual harassment and misconduct: Ensuring a zero-tolerance and implementing the complete recommendations of the Deschamps Report;
 - Increasing representation of women: Increasing the percentage of women in the military, including in leadership positions in the Defence staff as well as the percentage of women deployed to missions. Doing so implies setting a target and addressing recruitment, training, retention, and advancement.
 - Implementing gender-awareness training: Ensuring gender and diversity awareness training is an integral part of military training from lowest to highest ranking officers.
 - Implementing GBA Plus: Contextualizing and implementing GBA Plus training for all DND/CAF members working in policy and planning. Additional gender training should be developed and implemented at different levels to address different skills and competency requirements.
2. My second recommendation is for a new policy to **include the advancement of gender equality as a key objective of military missions**. Doing so would require a frank discussion around gender and security, and how military involvement can support transformative change, but I believe DND/CAF is well positioned for advancing gender equality and the women, peace and security agenda as part of its operations. This can be achieved by:
 - Ensuring the integration of gender perspectives and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda as part of CAF missions, including an understanding of their impact on the protection of the rights of women and girls and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. This is also important in the conduct of relief and recovery missions (including deployment of DART).
 - Increasing CAF contributions to multilateral peace and security efforts with a strong focus on deploying more women in all capacities.
 - Strengthening the role of the CAF in building the capacity of military organisations and military peacekeeping training centres around the world, with a specific focus on gender considerations and the integration of female military officers.

In conclusion, making gender equality a central part of a new defence policy would not only position Canada as a true leader in the world, but would also mean positive change for women and men in Canada and around the world.