

Defence Policy Review Roundtable July 19, 2016 (Ottawa)

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Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this Roundtable and discussion.

Gender perspectives in defence policy and operations involve multifaceted and diverse issues (ranging from women's participation to use of Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by peacekeepers. These issues are often not very well understood or accepted by security community. Or they are collapsed into a simplistic vision (limited to – for example - increasing the number of women in the CAF). My overarching recommendation for the Defence Policy Review is that the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) develop a comprehensive joint gender equality policy. This policy would set out goals, commitments and actions to be taken. It would bring together the multiple issues related to gender perspectives and the women, peace and security agenda.

The inspiration for a policy includes international commitments (such as the [United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security](#) and [NATO Directive 40-1](#)), national commitments (including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and policy commitments to GBA+ across federal government departments) and feminist security scholarship.

The policy would cover – at a minimum – five themes or areas of work:

1) *Introduce/strengthen attention to gender perspectives across the policy, substantive and operational work of the CAF and DND:* This would build on the path-breaking [Chief of Defense Staff \(CDS\) Directive for Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Relating Resolutions in CAF Planning and Operations](#) (20 January 2016). This Directive highlights the differential impacts armed conflicts have on men, women, girls and boys and how this is relevant to peacekeeping initiatives and CAF operations, policies and programs.

Other [submissions](#) have urged DND/CAF to pay attention to gender dimensions in this review and across policy and operations and I reiterate this recommendation.

This requires, among other steps, the robust use of GBA+ across CAF and DND. However, experience has shown that this requires capacity building and tailoring GBA+ to the work of specific staff members and unit. Despite the [clear arguments from the CDS](#) that there is a strong operational effectiveness rationale for the increased use of GBA+, there will be scepticism and resistance from many within the CAF and DND. A clear and convincing strategy will be required to counter these attitudes and demonstrate the relevance of this analysis. Therefore a complete DND/CAF curriculum should be developed, rather than relying on generic GBA training materials.

In addition to using GBA+, there should be a clear commitment to responding to the results of this analysis and having it inform policies, programs and operations. A key question is: what is different as a result of the analysis?

A specific policy subcomponent should outline Canada's commitments on gender equality as they relate to **international commitments to international peacekeeping**. Canadian is in a strong position to be a global champion of the women, peace and security agenda through our

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peacekeeping initiatives. However, this will require upgrading skills sets and robust attention to gender equality issues across all peacekeeping initiatives (not only a focus on women's participation). All training programs should include explicit and consistent attention to gender equality issues. Given [recent reports](#) of egregious abuse by United Nations peacekeepers, attention to codes of conduct and the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation should also be key elements in all capacity building initiatives.

- 2) *Increase the participation of women (and overall diversity) in the CAF:*** While [women's participation](#) in the CAF has grown to 15% overall and just under 4% in CAF Combat Arms, this still falls far short of the CAF goal of one in four members being female in ten years. Strategies in these areas must cover recruitment, advancement, retention, and transition to civilian life, as well as ensuring a safe work environment for all Forces members.

Strategies to increase women's participation should also be linked to broader efforts to ensure that the CAF is representative of the diversity of Canadian society.

- 3) *Eliminate sexist and homophobic attitudes and practices:*** While steps have been taken to respond to the findings of the External Review on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces ([Dechamps report](#)) more needs to be done to ensure that all Canadians are safe and harassment free as they serve their country. Public accountability on progress is paramount. [Operation Honour](#) is a good first step, but progress requires leadership, sustained commitment and resources.

Progress on this front is also requirement for credible and effective training of foreign military and defence staff.

- 4) *Improve support for CAF families:*** A gender analysis often draws attention to household dynamics and focuses on the unpaid care work done within families. This is relevant to DND/CAF given the work (unpaid and generally done by women) that military families do to support a serving member. Recent reports have highlighted the challenges faced by family members in supporting [members transitioning from military to civilian life](#) and the [need for more work](#) in this area.

- 5) *Engage in regular discussions with civil society organizations, researchers and activists:*** The fields of women, peace and security and feminist security sector studies are now sites of vibrant discussion and practical recommendations. Increased interaction between DND/CAF and these practitioners and academics could yield fruitful insights to advance gender mainstreaming objectives in Canada's defence structures.

This policy would include expected outcomes, clear accountability structures (who is responsible for the implementation of each element), dedicated budgets, new technical specialist staff to support implementation, an internal communication strategy to build understanding throughout CAF and DND, capacity building for staff, and annual public reporting on progress.

A comprehensive approach to gender equality issues in DND/CAF would also be a useful contribution to Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (C-NAP). The previous C-NAP expired in March of this year and civil society is eagerly looking forward to discussions on an updated plan. A DND/CAF comprehensive policy would give direction to the outcomes and actions that could be included in a new C-NAP.

One final note: as with all good policies, their development only marks the beginning. The difficult work is the follow-through and implementation of the good intentions. Yet an ambitious policy – with political support and adequate resources – could support Canada's international leadership on women, peace and security issues.