

Standing Committee on the Status of Women Inquiry on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces – April 20, 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair, as well as the members of the **Standing Committee on the Status of Women** for the opportunity to testify here today.

I am here as a **Veteran Military Sexual Trauma Survivor, Military Domestic Violence Survivor** and as a representative of the **Survivor Perspectives Consulting Group**, also referred to as SPCG.

SPCG was recently created by a small group of **Military Sexual Trauma Survivors**. For decades, we have watched in relative silence and now have come together to take action and to ensure survivor voices are heard and to create solutions to help combat this crisis.

Just as the Government of Canada uses **Gender Based Analysis PLUS**, which goes beyond sex and gender to other intersecting identity factors such as race, ethnicity, or age; the Canadian Armed Forces should consider the perspective of **Military Sexual Trauma Survivors** at every stage of strategy and policy development. We at SPCG are willing to work towards the provision of that perspective, in a professionally coordinated format.

We do not propose to have all the answers as we are not **Organizational Culture** or **Military Justice Experts**, but we are the unfortunate Experts by experience in **Military Sexual Trauma**.

- We can help define this problem; the full extent of which is still unknown. We can point to specific gaps, deficiencies, and issues.
- We know, for example, that the internal reporting mechanism is flawed and that independent oversight is needed.
- We can help find and develop solutions: immediate, medium, and long term solutions, because we have ideas. We have ideas that can be developed into plans, policies, and programs.
- We have, for example, developed a one-day workshop that can be used in the immediate term to help kick start the culture shift that is desperately needed throughout the organization. This training package, called the

Frontline Workshop, is survivor born and is based on civilian best practices, curated specifically for the Canadian Armed Forces. The Frontline Workshop will challenge and confront the social norms and unconscious biases of the attendees; it will shake their ethical foundations and open their minds unlike anything the military has done before.

- We can provide feedback on, and input into, strategies, plans, and policies, every step of the way during development, implementation, and monitoring stages. Just like any **GBA+ Analysis** of various identity factors, we want to provide the **Military Sexual Trauma Survivor Perspective** with potential solutions to the Canadian Armed Forces as a professional voice, as well as to other stakeholders such as **Veteran's Affairs Canada**.

We are currently in the building phase of our organization, but we are aiming to represent multiple identity factors including **Men, Indigenous, Veteran, LGBTQ2+ and Civilian Survivors**, among others, as this is not specifically a “Women’s Issue”. And yes, I did say Civilian Survivors because it is important to note that the impact of a **Sexualized Military Culture** is not limited to members of the military; the impact reaches beyond the perimeter of the workplace and negatively affects the lives of military families, spouses and children, as well as the community at large. A **Sexualized Military Culture**, in many cases, can lead to **Military Domestic Violence, Child Abuse and Civilian Sexual Assault**. Not only does this culture provide a safe space for perpetrators to hide and exist under the protection of a uniform, but it also inadvertently teaches victims to tolerate the intolerable, which leads to lives plagued with mental health challenges, potential homelessness and future abusive relationships. The **Social Cost** of allowing this toxic culture to survive extends to the **Canadian Public**, and that makes this a **Canadian Problem** with real financial and social costs affecting all taxpayers.

In closing, when **Lieutenant General Eyre** testified before this Committee on March 23rd, he explained that his approach to changing the **Sexualized Military Culture** was based on two streams; the second of which included Listening and Learning. This is exactly where SPCG fits in: our team can provide the perspectives needed to ensure that every Strategy, every Plan, every Policy, and every Program aimed at tackling this crisis is reviewed through a **Survivor-informed lens**. We want to be a part of those meaningful consultations as a way to help make the Canadian Armed Forces a better, safer place for those who come behind us.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for your time and for that of all Committee Members. I look forward to your questions.

MJ Batek Ocdt (Ret)