



WIIS-CANADA PRESENTS:

**#WEARENATO:  
THE ALLIANCE'S  
EFFORTS TO  
ADVANCE WOMEN,  
PEACE AND SECURITY**

*Celebrating NATO's 70th Anniversary*

**MARCH 27, 2019**

**1PM - 7:30PM**

**AT THE ROYAL CANADIAN MILITARY INSTITUTE (RCMI)  
TORONTO, ON**



This event is supported by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

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## The Event

To celebrate NATO's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Women in International Security Canada (WIIS-Canada) hosted a conference in Toronto on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at the Royal Canadian Military Institute. The WIIS-Canada conference highlighted the alliance's efforts to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, an area in which Canada has displayed a strong leadership role. The first roundtable brought together female Canadian leaders that had key positions within NATO to share their personal experience and talk about the meaningful participation of women in the Alliance. The second panel invited official Canadian representatives, as well as members from the civil society, to discuss current efforts to implement the WPS Agenda both within the institution and in the field. The aim of these panels was to highlight the outstanding work that has been done by our female Canadian leaders, both in civilian and military roles, at NATO, as well as take a critical look at NATO's efforts to include full and equal participation of women at all levels of conflict.

The event was followed by a networking reception for female scholars and practitioners, in collaboration with Canadian and U.S. partners including the Canadian Defence and Security Network, the Canadian for defence and Security Analysis, the NATO Association of Canada, Royal Canadian Military Institute, the Servicewomen's Salute and WIIS-Global. During the reception, we had a keynote address from Virginie Viscardy, NATO C&I Agency Representative to North American Organization and Industries. She spoke about career opportunities for women at NATO, both in civilian and military roles, and also shared interesting insights about her career progression. This important networking opportunity helped current graduate students and recent graduates establish connections and get more information about a career in international security, including with NATO.

## Outreach

A total of 102 participants took part in our event, including attendees for the conference and the reception. 81 of the individuals who registered were women. Most participants were from Ontario (with a high concentration from Toronto, Kingston, and Ottawa), but some attendees came as far as Alberta, Quebec, the United States and Switzerland. Most of the attendees were part of the defence community, and included university students, scholars, practitioners in international peace and security, defence policy analysts, Armed Forces service members, NATO officials and various stakeholders.

Online activities, including a series of videos and blog posts were featured before and after the event. A live tweet summarized the conversations that took place during our conference, and used the event's dedicated hashtag **#WIISC70NATO**. We encouraged participants to live tweet during the event and use the hashtag. WIIS-Canada's social media portals reached a total of **19,000** views on Facebook (number of people who saw contents by the page or about the page) and more than **67,000** impressions were measured on Twitter.

## Welcome Remarks



The executive director of Women in International Security Canada (WIIS-Canada) and organizer of the event, Ms. Caroline Leprince, first welcomed everyone to the conference *#WeAreNATO: The Alliance's Efforts to Advance Women, Peace and Security*. A year before NATO's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, WIIS-Canada was already thinking of organizing a conference that would highlight the Canadian women that worked for NATO and look at the Alliance's work to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Ms. Leprince said that we can be very proud of the Canadian female leaders that are currently representing us at the highest level at NATO,

with Lieutenant-General Christine Whitecross, serving as the Commandant of the NATO Defence College, Clare Hutchinson, as the NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security, and Vera Alexander, as the deputy ambassador of the Joint Delegation of Canada to NATO. It is also important to highlight the amazing work that is being done by Canadian women at all levels of chain of the command, and in civilian positions.

Ms. Leprince also expressed her optimism for the future of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Canada and at NATO. Bringing diversity into NATO missions is important; women can not only connect in different ways with the local population; they can help raise gender perspectives that should be taken into account in operations. We are also seeing more and more men becoming champions of GBA+ and holding the positions of gender advisors. These are important changes if we wish to ensure that we change the culture of the Armed Forces. Ms. Leprince concluded her remarks by acknowledging the support of NATO for funding this project as part of their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and encouraged everyone to go read the special NATO policy papers that WIIS-Canada published on themes related to the conference.

## Video Series “Why Does NATO Matter?”



WIIS-Canada launched a special video, produced by Ms. Victoria Heath, that asked members of the civil society “Why does NATO (still) matter?” It featured several testimonies of practitioners and Millennials that discussed what NATO meant to them, what NATO represents for the international community, and what will be the future of NATO. The video presents the history of the Alliance and promotes a powerful and inspiring message about the future of the Alliance, after 70 years of collective defence.

## Roundtable: The meaningful participation of Canadian Women in the Alliance

### *Moderator*

- Julie Lindhout, NATO Association of Canada

### *Speakers*

- Dr. Grace Scoppio, Royal Military College of Canada, Canadian Forces College
- Lieutenant-Colonel Rhea McLean, Canadian Armed Forces, Operation Reassurance
- Commodore Rebecca Patterson, Canadian Armed Forces Strategic Response Team – Sexual Misconduct

Ms. Julie Lindhout opened the first panel by highlighting the importance of organizations like the NATO Association of Canada (NAoC) and WIIS-Canada in engaging Canadians about NATO and NATO's goal for peace, prosperity and security. She then said we were very lucky to have female Canadian leaders that have served under NATO, as part of Operation Reassurance in Latvia, and Operation Attention in Afghanistan, as well as an expert studying diversity and gender in military organizations, to talk to us about the meaningful participation of women in the Alliance.

Dr. Grace Scoppio started by sharing with the audience her experience in the military education system, in which she broke new grounds. Dr. Scoppio is a professor of Defence Studies and the dean of continuing studies at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMCC) in Kingston, Ontario. Dr. Scoppio is also highly involved in the empowerment of women in the field of defence and security and was part of the selection committee to the first Peace with Women Fellowship. As a scholar, Dr. Scoppio conducts comparative research on gender and diversity in military organizations. Dr. Scoppio believes that to be an effective female leader in defence requires to have a strong understanding of military culture and to be able to work in a male-dominated environment. At the same time, she believes that cross-cultural and strong interpersonal skills, as well as a strong support of multiculturalism, bilingualism, and indigenous rights are central to good leadership.

Lieutenant-Colonel (LCol) Rhea MacLean was the gender advisor on Operation Reassurance and she talked about her role in Latvia. Her role consisted primarily in implementing a gender-based analysis (GBA+) to operations, and ensuring that Canadian troops understood and knew how to prevent harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviours (*Operation Honour*). In addition to these core functions, she established a network in Latvia for all the gender focal points of the different armed forces. She also supported efforts of capacity building that benefited women in Latvia. LCol MacLean then shared some lessons she learned from her mission in Latvia. She observed that there was a need to find a balance in practicing gender differentiation to avoid falling in gender essentialization. She emphasized the importance of the implementation of gender

perspectives in pre-conflict/crisis settings, warned us about the perils of 'gender neutrality,' and emphasized how the respect of differences is critical to international security.



Commodore Rebecca Patterson has been serving in the Canadian Armed Forces for more than 30 years. She joined the Armed Forces before the end of the Cold War as a trained critical care nurse and was one of four nurses to go to basic training. She served in a Canadian field hospital during the first Gulf War. She later deployed to Somalia with the Canadian Airborne Regiment, where she led an important structural change in the distribution health services. She then became the deputy commander of health services, where she was responsible for strategic and operational medical planning. In 2010, she deployed to Kabul as a senior medical planner, a deployment that lasted 342 days instead of 4 months. Reflecting on her experience in Afghanistan, Commodore Patterson mentioned that she had to assert her authority as a servicewoman to her Afghan counterparts. She also made a point of integrating the voices of Afghan women in her work. Commodore Patterson said that one of the strengths of NATO is that it focuses on capability building and its processes allow for the introduction of additional perspectives.

The question and answer period discussed themes brought forward in the presentations, namely the need for more diversity in skills in the Armed Forces; the difficulties to assert oneself as a woman in the military; that Canada still has a lot to learn from its allies when it comes to integration; and the importance to include civilian voices and more gender perspectives. The panelists concluded on an optimistic note and considered that culture change was taking place in the Canadian Armed Forces, however more efforts could be made to include more diversity within the ranks.

## **Panel: NATO, WPS, and Gender Mainstreaming in the institution and in the field**

### **Moderator**

- **Beth Woroniuk, Women, Peace and Security Network Canada**

### **Speakers**

- **Agnieszka Fal-Dutra Santos, The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders**
- **Dr. Stéfanie von Hlatky, Queen's University, Centre for International and Defence Policy**
- **Annik Lussier Rez, Global Affairs Canada**
- **Lieutenant-Colonel Darrel Zientek, DPK 5 United Nations Thematics, Department of National Defence**

Ms. Beth Woroniuk opened the discussion by providing some historical background to the Women, Peace and Security agenda at NATO. These efforts started back in 1961, when senior NATO women officials organized events to discuss career opportunities for women in the Alliance and its allies' armed forces. However, it is only in the year 2000 that the United Nation adopted the Security Council 1325 (UNSCR 1325), a resolution that recognized the importance of including women in peace negotiation and security processes. NATO endorsed these principles, and published in 2007 its first NATO/EAPC Policy and Action Plan on WPS. In 2018, NATO published its second NATO/EAPC Women, Peace and Security Policy and Action Plan, which contained a message highlighting the importance of integration, inclusion and integrity. While these are notable and ground-breaking advancements, NATO continues to see women as a force multiplier and a matter of operational efficiency. As a result, peace activists are against NATO's operationalization of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, because they see it as a way to militarize women issues.

Dr. Stéfanie von Hlatky started her intervention by emphasizing the distinction between NATO, the organization, and NATO's member states. NATO cannot dictate how its member states will implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda, but they are encouraged to follow NATO's Policy and Action Plan. As an organization, NATO has done a lot for the Women, Peace and Security agenda, but members and partner nations need to do more. Dr. von Hlatky also argued that NATO could improve the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda by doing a better job at translating its Action Plan into day to day tasks. As well, the frequent turnover of personnel makes the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda challenging, and NATO has not been very good at updating its Action Plan. Another issue revolves around the question of how to harmonize behaviours across the Alliance.

Ms. Annik Lussier Rez, head of the Women, Peace and Security Policy Unit at Global Affairs Canada, reiterated Canada's commitment to act as a champion on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In order to do so, the government has adopted a holistic approach that involves 9 federal partners, including Northern Affairs and Indigenous Services Canada. Ms. Lussier Rez then underlined the five key points of the Canadian Women, Peace, and Security National Action Plan: women's meaningful and safe participation in all aspect of peace and security, end impunity for sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and sexual exploitation, meeting the specific needs of women and girls in humanitarian settings, and strengthening capacity building in peace operation (Elsie Initiative). She then reminded the audience that Global Affairs Canada is a strong supporter of Clare Hutchinson, the Special Representative to the Secretary General for Women, Peace and Security, and said that her office is currently developing measurable indicators in order to better assess the performance of the implementation of all the gender-based policies.

LCol Darrel Zientek, former Deputy Chair of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives from 2016-2018, offered his own perspectives on the advancement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. LCol Zientek stated that each NATO member has its own vision on how they want to implement the agenda. While some countries are proactive in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, other states are dragging their feet. He mentioned that there is an annual conference of the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives (NCGP) that helps NATO members reach agreements on issues of gender perspectives. He also reminded the audience that the discussion must go beyond women and must also include LGBTQA+ individuals. Although NATO is proving to be a forward-thinking organization in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, we cannot say the same of all its member and partner states. These annual conferences are important to frame discussions on how, as a whole, the Alliance wants to implement its policies on the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Ms. Agnieszka Fal-Dutra Santos then talked about how the actions of NATO are being perceived by members of the civil society. The relationship her organization has with NATO is complex, mainly due to a growing concern about the militarization of women, which The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) sees as a result of NATO's operationalization of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Ms. Fal-Dutra Santos mentioned that her organization found that there was a tension in the implementation of the objectives of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in NATO missions. In fact, local women often tell GNWP that they don't want to talk to the Alliance and they want to see NATO leave their country. GNWP has been working on developing the concept of Localization, as a good practice in "how to" implement the UNSCR 1325. It is a people-based, bottom-up strategy that is based on the premise that local ownership and participation lead to more effective policy-making and implementation. In order to be more effective, Ms. Fal-Dutra Santos is of the opinion that NATO should listen more to grassroots organizations, rather than taking a siloed approach in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda

Ms. Woroniuk queried the panel about the lack of progress made by NATO on advancing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. She identified problems of underfunding and uneasiness at the higher levels of the Alliance to discuss gender issues, due to inappropriate training and vocabulary; and asked if hearing the voices of women who have served could be a viable solution. Dr. von Hlatky agreed that now that more women are serving in the Armed Forces understanding their experiences can help shape better policies that will help retain women in the Armed Forces and in turn increase women's participation in operations. Dr. von Hlatky also said that having more women in senior leadership positions will help better institutionalize the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Ms. Fal-Dutra Santos recognized that it was a particularly difficult time for the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, as many think that the necessary advancements have been made. Ms. Fal-Dutra Santos considers that NATO can do a better job at consulting the civil society and she would like to see grassroots organizations have more influence in shaping the terms of the discussion, monitoring, and holding the Alliance accountable.



LCol Zientek was of the opinion that the political environment is at fault for the current backlash. He said that a lot of nations only talk the talk, and many prefer to leave gender out of their discussion. LCol Zientek concluded by saying that there is a lot of data being gathered on the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and he wished that NATO would analyze it to see what it is doing right and wrong. Ms. Lussier Rez emphasized the leadership role played by Canada to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the work that is currently being done, like establishing mechanisms for collaboration and coordination; creating measurements and reporting channels; publishing implementation plans; and reinforcing the role of civil society in providing insights. Listening to local voices is also very important, according to Ms. Lussier Rez, as they can help guide efforts since they know what works and what doesn't.

## Closing Remarks



Dr. Allan English, associate professor on Canadian military history at Queen's University, started his closing remarks by reminding us that women have been involved in Canada's military service and have been contributing to Canada's military history for more than 100 years. During the First World War, the two war nurses Eleanor Thompson and Meta Hodge were the first women to win the military medal for their bravery. Women's involvement in the Armed Forces has changed considerably over the last decade. At first, all they could do was volunteer, and in 1904, they were able to serve as nursing sisters and many obtained military ranks.

Despite the progress made in recent years, Dr. English mentioned there has been significant pushback against the integration of women in the Canadian military over the last decades, as revealed by the numerous scandals of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviors that have been occurring in the Canadian Armed Forces. However, he believes this tendency is reversible. It will however require a comprehensive culture change, as well as an external monitoring body. In order to further advance the Women, Peace, and Security agenda in Canada and at NATO, Dr. English argues that it will be necessary to establish clear goals and indicators of measurements to assess the progress that are being made, and we must encourage more women to get involved in organizations that play a role in advancing Women, Peace, and Security.

## Keynote Address



During the networking event, Ms. Virginie Viscardy delivered a keynote address and talked about career opportunities for women at NATO. She started by sharing her own story that led her to hold her current position as the NATO C&I Agency Representative to North American Organization and Industries. She was herself the daughter of a NATO official, and therefore the Alliance has always played a central role in her life. She first started working at NATO as an intern for 9 months, which led her to obtain a permanent position. Her work at NATO did not occur without any hurdles, as she struggled to obtain the recognition from her male colleagues. NATO is still encountering issues in employing a diverse workforce and the Alliance has been

implementing several initiatives recently to improve women's integration in the organization. Among them, NATO has voiced its will to increase the number of women in its International Staff; to offer greater opportunities for young professionals; to implement work/life balance and maternity leave policies; and to adopt policies to put an end to harassment in the workplace. For those in the audience that are interested in starting a career at NATO, Ms. Viscardy mentioned that NATO was currently in the process of hiring graduate students and she invited the graduate students to apply for these internship opportunities. She then concluded her remarks by emphasizing the importance of networking, as it often opens doors to unexpected opportunities.