

Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families echoes need for focus on women Veterans

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, CANADA, June 12, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The release today of the final report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs' study of the Experience of Women Veterans has highlighted and reaffirmed many of the challenges experienced by women who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) or the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), issues which the Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families has also heard first-hand through their engagement with women Veterans.

Fardous Hosseiny, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Atlas Institute, said he is pleased Atlas had opportunity to contribute to the overall study adding that Deputy CEO, MaryAnn Notarianni and Director of Applied Research, Dr. Sara Rodrigues were invited to provide testimony to the Committee as well as through the Athena Project initiative where the advisory group of women Veterans were supported to submit a written brief to the committee.

"It is encouraging to see that there are several recommendations regarding the needs for research specific to women Veterans, including the first recommendation that calls for a collaborative approach," he said, highlighting CAF, the RCMP, the Canadian Institute of Health Research, and the allied countries could all play a role in a collective response to the need.

Dr. Rodrigues said it is important to note that they highlighted issues specific for additional research, including the unique physical impact, and increased risk factors for both physical and mental health impacting women increasing evidence to inform the development of policies and programs for women Veterans. She explained that the Athena Project is an Atlas-led initiative taking a community-engaged approach to the research process. A working group was convened in the spring of 2023 to support the design and development of studies on women's well-being. Of the study recently launched, Dr. Rodrigues, said the study explores how women's experiences in service impact health care needs and outcomes as a Veteran. "The perspectives and insights of the women in the working group have helped guide this study on women Veterans unmet health needs. We expect that our results, expected in late 2024, will help to fill gaps in existing research, identify policy and program needs and begin to help service providers support the mental health of women Veterans."

Hosseiny commended the Committee for undertaking such a comprehensive study in the issue which he said is crucial given women's experiences have been underrepresented in both studies and in programming. "The work we have undertaken with the Athena Project to date has

highlighted many of those same challenges the report has profiled, whether as a result of service, or due to transitioning into post-service life. Our study is examining the health care needs, experiences, and outcomes that are specific to women Veterans, including diverse women Veterans, how women Veterans navigate the services landscape, and how they support their own well-being.”

Tabitha Beynen, a Lived Experience Lead at Atlas, is a Veteran of the CAF who has brought her perspectives as a woman who has served, and also been involved in supporting the Athena Project, as well as several other projects with the Atlas Institute. She says that working in this capacity as an advisor allows her use her experiences to play a role in shaping research about the unique challenges of women Veterans.

“Engagement is key to understanding the unique experiences women have had during their service in the CAF or RCMP.” Beynen said. “Collaborating with women Veterans on research helps us ensure that questions asked, and the evidence generated, reflects the needs of those it is designed to benefit.”

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Note: The Atlas Institute is able to coordinate individuals from the working group in the Athena Project for lived experience interviews if required.

ABOUT THE ATLAS INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND FAMILIES

The Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families works with Veterans, Families, service providers and researchers to bridge the divide between research and practice so Veterans and their Families can get the best possible mental health care and supports. The Atlas Institute was originally established as the Centre of Excellence on PTSD and Related Mental Health Conditions, through the Minister of Veterans Affairs’ November 2015 mandate letter, with funding and budget announced in the March 2017 federal budget.

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