



## 2022 **BREAKING DOWN THE BARRICADES:** Women in the Defence World

*“The opportunities are endless, and the rewards are many. However, so are the challenges, so be wise about it. Go into it eyes open.”*

~ Denise Preston

on all my portfolios whilst maintaining a work-life balance with my family” as one of her top goals of the year. She believes her success is attributable to the ongoing support of her husband and three daughters. She also loves to travel and has a passion for teaching dance.



**Dr. Denise Preston**  
Executive Director, DND  
Sexual Misconduct Response Centre  
Ottawa, ON

**DR. DENISE PRESTON** is the Executive Director of the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre (SMRC). In fact, she was responsible for creating this brand-new organization within DND/CAF in the face of significant challenges from within and outside the institution.


Preston had a long career in criminal justice as a clinician, researcher, and executive with expertise in sexual violence, and gender-based violence. When she read the media articles in 2014/2015 about sexual violence within the CAF, Preston says “I felt a very strong pull to this [defence] world as I knew I had a great deal to offer to address this critical issue. I also have tremendous respect for the CAF as an essential institution, and I have a daughter in the military so I felt even more compelled to step in to do what I could.” So, when she saw that the CAF was looking for someone to set up and lead the SMRC in 2017, she quickly applied.

Preston has had many stand-out moments in her career, but one still impacts her and has strongly influenced her work at the SMRC. “My first opportunity to participate in a restorative justice engagement session was between an offender on my caseload who had committed manslaughter and the son of the man he had killed. I had the privilege to bear witness to awesome (in the true sense of the word) examples of the human capacity for remorse, forgiveness, and redemption after a senseless crime that resulted in such tremendous loss, grief, pain, and anger. These individuals were exemplary .... With this experience as a backdrop, I am tremendously satisfied to be leading the development of a Restorative Engagement program within the department to address individual harms, institutional betrayal, and systemic cultural issues.” This program is a clear example of Preston’s commitment to contributing to culture change in DND/CAF in a collaborative way.

With all that she’s seen over the past five years, Preston would still encourage young women to enter the defence world. “The opportunities are endless, and the rewards are many. However, so are the challenges, so be wise about it. Go into it eyes open. Find allies and mentors. And speak up (again, wisely, given the real potential for backlash and retaliation). Be part of the solution.”

For Preston, the most rewarding thing about working at the SMRC has been the opportunity to meet, support, and partner with so many inspirational current and former members who continue to fight for change ... despite the profound harms and betrayals they have suffered.”

Preston will be retiring in the coming months, but she is confident that she is leaving “a strong Centre in the hands of a very capable team.”



**Elisabeth Preston**  
Chief Legal Counsel & VP  
International Compliance  
GD-MS International, Ottawa ON

**ELISABETH PRESTON**’s entrance into the world of defence was rather accidental in nature but there’s nothing happenstance about the dedication she brings to her job.

Preston is the Chief Legal Counsel and Vice President of International Compliance at General Dynamics Mission Systems International. She is responsible for handling all legal and trade matters for operations in Canada, the UK, Italy, Turkey, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Brunei and the United Arab Emirates and wherever they market internationally. She leads a team responsible for guiding and advising the company on all legal and compliance matters, from contracts to employment law, real estate to intellectual property, export to corporate governance, anti-corruption to privacy, procurement law and litigation to forming new international companies and more.

Though she wouldn’t describe herself as a classic military “buff”, Preston has worked for 35 years in defense and is an

ABOVE LEFT: Dr. Denise Preston is the executive director at the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre.

ABOVE RIGHT: Elisabeth Preston has worked in the defence field for over 35 years.

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~ Elisabeth Preston



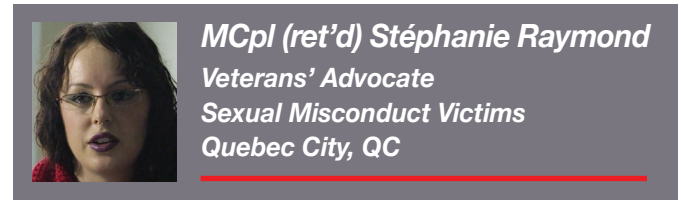
expert in how defense companies are regulated. She is keenly interested in the dangerous relationship between corruption, and terrorism, and how companies can foster a professional culture of ethical compliance within vibrant competitive enterprises. As such, she says: “My interest in the world of defence, security, and aerospace evolved first as an accidental first job and thereafter as a fertile ground for my abilities and interests to take hold.”

Preston has worked in the field since she was 21, starting with a company that designed and sold emergency communications products in Montreal. As a lawyer and business executive she has honed specialized knowledge critically important to international defence and aerospace companies. Of her dedication, her nominator Lorena MacKenzie, President of WiDs, says: “For 35 years, Elisabeth has continuously devoted herself to the defence and security marketplace, working tirelessly to reflect a strong moral compass in her work. In particular, she has used her executive roles to influence businesses to embrace positive cultural instincts and professional practices.”

A standout example of that influence is best illustrated when Preston took a job with a tiny company, with less than two dozen employees, working with a CEO that dreamed of taking the business public. Over the course of about five years, it became a world leader in counterterrorism solutions and, yes, a publicly traded company. It was an experience Preston describes as “A roller coaster ride during a turbulent economy and was no easy ride at that... I realized when I finally moved on from that company that I had been tested by fire, withstood it keeping my sturdy moral compass intact – and knew the strength of my metal thereafter.”

Preston encourages young women entering her field to similarly embrace their own strength. She says: «If I had to give advice to a young woman entering this field I would say ‘don’t hide your light under a bushel’ and don’t overlook any opportunity to show your best work. There are lots of other folks out there who can get that same job done in an average way so show that you are exemplary. Be on the lookout for wisdom and learn from those that demonstrate it. Take the high road in everything you do. Keep yourself positive and motivated by avoiding distracting

politics or drama. Finally, cut bait and move on if you determine that the people around you do not take an interest in you. It’s not a dress rehearsal.”



**MCpl (ret'd) Stéphanie Raymond**  
Veterans' Advocate  
Sexual Misconduct Victims  
Quebec City, QC

**MASTER CORPORAL (ret'd) STÉPHANIE RAYMOND's** courage in shining a light on the sexual misconduct of the Canadian Armed Forces helped spark an independent investigation, which led to Justice Deschamps' report and Operation Honour. Her tenacity has paved a path toward meaningful change in the way cases of military sexual misconduct are handled and in how survivors are cared for during and after their military service.

Raymond served in the infantry from 2001 to 2005 and as a Human Resource Administrator from 2006 to 2013, signing on at a recruiting booth at her school when she was 16 years old. Faced with challenges such as poorly fitting equipment and clothing, and men soldiers' resentment of women in the Army environment, Raymond found she had to put in triple the effort of most of her male colleagues to achieve success. Her completion of her Master Corporal course was a personal victory.

In 2013, she courageously made public her experiences of sexual assault in the CAF. Since then, her objective has always been to help civil society and decision-makers better understand the unique challenges faced by military sexual trauma survivors throughout their trauma, the reporting and legal process, their transition out of military service, and their rehabilitation to civilian life.

In 2021, Raymond acted as a witness at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. She used her first-hand experiences to shed light on the consequences of whistleblowing in the CAF and to advocate for an independent body that can adjudicate sexual assault cases. She also underlined the importance of having adequate victim assistance and health care in French and to support the victims and witnesses released from the military after reporting a sexual misconduct.

*ABOVE LEFT: Elisabeth Preston leads the GD-MS team responsible for guiding and advising the company on all legal and compliance matters.*

*ABOVE RIGHT: Stéphanie Raymond served in the CAF from 2001 until her retirement in 2013.*

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