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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

National Defence Task Force Report on Equality Rights

The purpose of this memorandum is to acquaint you with the background to recent media reports on the National Defence Task Force Report on Equality Rights. This Report addresses the issues of women in combat and the admission of homosexuals in the Canadian Forces.

The internal task force to examine how equality rights would impact on the services was created as one effect of the Government's response ("Towards Equality") to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee's report on equality rights.

The Task Force submitted its Final Report to the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) by October 1. In order to inform his senior commanders, without comment, of the results of the Task Force, the CDS sent a telex, a copy of which became available to the media and is the basis for the current media reports.

In terms of process, the CDS will complete his own assessment of the Task Force report within a month and will then present recommendations to Mr. Beatty.

The leak of the Report may raise questions as to the Government's commitment to implement "Toward Equality". It would therefore be important for Government statements to stress that its recommendations have not yet been examined by Mr. Beatty nor has he received the views of the CDS.

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We have not received a copy of the Report. We understand, however, that the report does not recommend opening military occupations to women beyond the fourteen already recommended in interim reports and approved by the CDS and the Minister. This position is not inconsistent with the commitment made in Toward Equality to expand the role of women in the Armed Forces "in a manner consistent with the requirement of the Armed Forces to be operationally effective in the interests of national security." [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The alleged comment of the report that the acceptance of homosexuals and lesbians in the Forces would result in a serious decrease in operational effectiveness is more controversial, and does not appear consistent with the Government's declaration in Toward Equality that "one's sexual orientation is irrelevant to whether one can perform a job or use a service or facility", and that nobody should be denied employment opportunities "for reasons that are irrelevant to their capacity and ability to do the job".

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