



A reported sexual assault at CFB Esquimalt will not see the inside of a court room. BC Prosecution Services confirmed it is not moving ahead with charges. (BlackPress file photo)

No charges laid in reported sexual assault at Canadian Forces Base on Vancouver Island

Reporting sexual assault hugely important, says Ending Violence B.C.

NINA GROSSMAN / May. 27, 2019 5:40 p.m. / NEWS

The case of an alleged sexual assault at CFB Esquimalt near Victoria will not be heard in court.

While investigators from the Canadian Armed Forces Military Police recommended charges, B.C.'s Crown Prosecution Service will not be pressing charges in the case of a reported sexual assault at the naval base last fall.

“After a full and careful review of all the evidence gathered by the investigative agency, the reviewing Crown was unable to conclude that the charge assessment standard had been

met and no charge was approved,” said Dan McLaughlin, communications counsel for the BC Prosecution Service.

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In B.C., Crown applies a two-part test to any case brought forward. That test measures if there is a “substantial likelihood of a conviction” and if so, “whether the public interest requires a prosecution.”

McLaughlin said the first standard wasn’t met in the CFB Esquimalt case.

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Still, the fact the Oct. 5 allegation was reported at all should be commended, said Tracy Porteous, executive director at Ending Violence B.C.

“Very few survivors report sexual assault for a myriad of good reasons, from [being] worried they won’t be believed, worried they will be blamed, worried that they will be shamed...” Porteous said. “The only way that we are going to be able to decrease the amount of sexual assault that’s taking place in our society is for survivors to come forward.

And that isn't to say that every survivor should come forward

– we only want those who feel that they have the means and the confidence and the support to do so,” she added. “But I think it’s important for us to acknowledge and appreciate and respect those that do.”

Details of the case are not available since no charges were laid, but Porteous said she has a deep respect for the woman who reported.

“She came up against a hugely strong institution,” Porteous said. “She might have had all kinds of fears of retribution or not being believed ... and she came forward anyways.

I hope somebody is working with the survivor and helping her understand that Crown’s decision not to go forward has nothing to do with her credibility ... or the believability of her [story].”

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In Canada, sexual assault has some of the lowest reporting rates, in part due to common knowledge that cases are frequently dropped before they can get to court.

“I think anytime a survivor comes forward and feels let down by the system that she is seeking help from has the potential to send a message to other survivors to say, ‘don’t bother,’” said Porteous. “But it’s always worth coming forward to let the system know about a dangerous person out there.

She may have done the greatest service that she could have possibly done for Canadians by coming forward.”