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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 33 / PCCEM 33

EXERCISE/EXERCICE NEW HORIZONS

**THE CF AS AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE:  
THE KEY FOR A SUCCESSFUL GENDER INTEGRATION**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
TABLE OF FIGURES.....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	3
HISTORY OF GENDER INTEGRATION IN THE CF .....	6
WHY WOMEN LEAVE THE CF.....	11
THE CF AS AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE .....	14
WORK-LIFE BALANCE.....	17
Flexible Work Arrangement .....	18
Leave.....	21
Work-Life Balance Programs in Other Countries .....	23
CONCLUSION.....	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	28

## TABLE OF FIGURES

Table 1: Total CF Regular Force Strength (1989-2006).....	8
Table 2: Female Regular Force Officer Representation by Military Occupation (1989-2006) .....	9
Table 3: Rate of Attrition – Female and Male Officers (2001-2005) .....	10
Table 4: Average Attrition Rates by Occupational Group (1989-2001) .....	10
Table 5: Top Ten Reasons Why CF Members Leave the Force.....	11
Table 6: Top Five Reasons Why CF Women Leave the Force .....	12
Table 7: What Could Your Employer do to Help Balance Work and Family? .....	18
Table 8: Public Service Flexible Work Arrangements .....	19

**Like most large companies, the military faces a war for talent – that is, a battle to recruit and retain officers and enlisted personnel with the intellectual flexibility, the technical abilities, and communication skills needed today. If it does not fundamentally rethink the way it attracts, develops, and retains people, it will lose the war...<sup>1</sup>**

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, concerns associated with the recruitment and retention of military personnel have increased within many countries' military. The Canadian Forces (CF) is not immune to this situation and has been struggling to retain personnel and solve a problem of shortage in key critical occupations. It is recognized that the CF, as a federal institution, must represent Canadian demographic diversity in its organization while reflecting core Canadian values. As the social and demographic landscape of this country has changed and will continue to change over time, the CF must continue to change in order to remain current, and thus relevant, to the Canadian people.<sup>2</sup>

Canada has witnessed many changes to its social makeover in the last century, the most dramatic being the revolution in the labor force composition. Not only did women enter the Canadian labour force, but they now account for almost 50% of it.<sup>3</sup> The massive entrance of women into the workforce has meant that women's values and views

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Ankerson and Losel Tethong, "Retain or Perish: Why Recruiting Won't Save the CF," *Strategic Datalink*, no. 95, (March 2001): 3.

<sup>2</sup> T. Wait, *Canadian Demographics and Social Values at a Glance: Impact on Strategic HR Planning*, Directorate of Strategic Human Resource Coordination (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2002), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Canada, Statistic Canada, *Labour Forces Characteristics by Age and Sex*, <http://www.statcan.ca/english/Subjects/Labour/LFS/lfs-en.htm>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006. In Jan 2007, women accounted for 46.65% of the workforce.

have transformed the organizations in which they work and the society in general.<sup>4</sup> Although women have been integrated in the CF since 1951 and gender integration policies have dominated the political field and shaped the workforce policies and practices within the CF, the CF remains a “male-dominated organization”<sup>5</sup> where women constitute a minority. Women are still under-represented at the higher rank level and female attrition rates continue to be higher than those of male service members.<sup>6</sup>

As the traditional “white Anglophone male”<sup>7</sup> military applicant pool in Canada is projected to decrease in proportion to a broader potential applicant pool, and competition is expected to increase for skilled and motivated youth in the labour market, the future participation of women will be critical for the survival of the CF as they will be required to make-up a greater percentage of the CF workforce. Thus, to fully succeed gender integration and allow for its survival, the CF must continue on its path to become an “Employer of Choice” (EOC) as stated in *Military HR Strategy 2020 – Facing the People Challenges of the Future* released in 2002.<sup>8</sup> Reaching recognized EOC status for the CF

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<sup>4</sup> T. Wait, *Canadian Demographics and Social Values at a Glance: Impact on Strategic HR Planning*, Directorate of Strategic Human Resource Coordination (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2002), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Male dominated is defined as an environment which is comprised of less than 30% female. Karen D. Davis, “Organizational Environment and Turnover: Understanding Women’s Exit from the Canadian Forces” (master’s Thesis, McGill University, 1994), 25.

<sup>6</sup> Lisa Tanner, *Gender Integration in the Canadian Forces – A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis*, Report Prepared for the Directorate of Military Gender Integration & Employment Equity (Ottawa: Department Of National Defence, 1999), ix.

<sup>7</sup> Major Jeff Tasseron, “Military Manning and the Revolution in Social Affairs,” *Canadian Military Journal* (Autumn 2001): 5.

<sup>8</sup> Department of National Defence, *Military HR Strategy 2020: Facing the People Challenges of the Future* (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 2002), 30.

would allow it them to compete against the best organizations to recruit and retain the best personnel resources.

EOC is a concept that was developed from studying successful public and private organizations. The basic principle backing the concept is the recognition of its employees as its most valuable assets. Common characteristics of an EOC are organizational culture, care of the people, growth and opportunity, a sense of community, good pay and benefits, leadership and a safe environment.<sup>9</sup> Organizations are beginning to see that, even with technological advancements and streamlined processes, an organization is only as good as its people. Therefore, as organizations begin to focus more on their people, common challenges are arising. To conquer these challenges, organizations are implementing new strategies and practices.

Overall, EOC strategies can be divided into three broad themes: workforce development, work life balance (Quality of life), recruitment, and retention. Strategies and practices within the theme of workforce development are concerned with creating the leaders of the future. The second theme, quality of life, is increasingly important as many employees struggle to balance family and work. Finally, recruitment and retention practices are evolving towards a more integrative approach that combines a variety of practices to offer a total employee compensation package. Practices that support employees development and improve quality of life will in turn support recruitment and

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<sup>9</sup> M.D Sutherland, D.G Torriceli and R.F Karg, "Employer-Of-Choice Branding for Knowledge Workers," *South African Journal of Business Management* (Fall 2002): 15; <http://www.web.ebscohost.com>; Internet; accessed 4 Mars 2007.

retention strategies. When combined, the three themes will help to create the workforce that organizations require for future success.<sup>10</sup>

In terms of targeting women as a specific demographic cohort, the CF has much to learn and achieve if it wants to achieve the status of EOC. It is essential to identify why women leave the military and develop progressive HR policies and practices specifically targeted to attract and retain the female population. Beginning with an overview of the progress that has been made to date in integrating women, this paper will examine the reasons why women leave the military and will examine EOC strategies already in place in the private and public sectors and suggest HR approaches, such as work-life balance, that could be applied to our current policies and practices to improve CF recruitment and retention of our female personnel.

## **HISTORY OF GENDER INTEGRATION IN THE CF**

Women have been involved with Canada's military service for more than 100 years. Numbers in uniform have fluctuated over the years, with the largest number, nearly 50 000, having served in the Women's division of the Army, Navy and Air Force during the Second World War.<sup>11</sup> Although the Canadian government approved the enrolment of women into the regular Force component in 1951, the number of serving women remained small until the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the

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<sup>10</sup> NJ Holden, *An Analysis of Trends in Human Resource Practices in Public and Private Sectors*, Report Prepared for the Operational Research Division and the Director Strategic Human Resource Coordination (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2000), ii.

<sup>11</sup> NJ Holden and LM Tanner, *An Examination of Current Gender Integration Policies and Practices in TTCP Countries*, Report Prepared by the Directorate Military Gender Integration and Employment Equity (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2001), 3.

Status of Women was released in 1970, which resulted in the lifting of the 1500 or 1.5% of the total force ceiling restriction and the expansion of employment opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

Pivotal to the progression of gender integration was the proclamation of the Canadian Human Rights Act in 1978, which prohibited discrimination in employment practices on the basis of gender but still allowed an exception of “bona fida” occupational requirements.<sup>13</sup> Direct response to the proclamation was the conduct of the Servicewomen in Non-Traditional Environment and Roles (SWINTER) to determine the suitability of women serving in near-combat roles and at remote locations.<sup>14</sup> By 1985, women were allowed in 75% of military occupations.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the Combat Related Employment of Women (CREW) trials were ordered in 1987 to re-evaluate the restriction of women serving in combat occupations. Before the trials were conducted, a 1989 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision directed the Canadian Forces to remove all restrictions barring women from employment in the CF except for that of submarine service. The Tribunal allowed a phased implementation process, with the goal of

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<sup>12</sup> Karen D. Davis, “Organizational Environment and Turnover: Understanding Women’s Exit from the Canadian Forces” (master’s Thesis, McGill University, 1994), 15.

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Vivian, *From the Past and into the Future: Gender Integration in the Canadian Armed Forces 1970-1999*, Report Prepared for the Directorate of Military Gender Integration and Employment Equity (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1998), 5. The Act also prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, national and ethnic origin, color, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, pardoned conviction and disability. The “Bona fida” clause meant that a job could be refused to an individual if the individual could not perform it “safely, efficiently and reliably”.

<sup>14</sup> NJ Holden and LM Tanner, *An Examination of Current Gender Integration policies and Practices in TTCP Countries*, Report Prepared by the Directorate Military Gender Integration and Employment Equity (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2001), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Karen Ritchie, *2001 Year in Review: Special Edition*, Paper presented to the Committee on Women in NATO (Ottawa, Department of National Defence, 2002), 1; <http://www.nato.int/ims/2001/win/canada.htm>; Internet; accessed 26 Feb 2007.

completely integrating women by 1999.<sup>16</sup>

Today, women are employed without restrictions in all combat roles, functions and occupations as the last barrier of submarine duty was lifted in 2001 with the purchase of the Victoria Class submarine. Additionally, women have served in all theaters and operations, including the Persian Gulf War, UN missions worldwide, and most recently, in Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup> In 2006, women comprised 12.8% of the Regular Force and 20% of the Primary Reserves. Table 1 shows the breakdown of men and women in uniform in 1989, 2003 and 2006.

**Table 1: Total CF Regular Force Strength (1989-2006)<sup>18</sup>**

	1989	2003	2006
WOMEN	8,641	6,992	7945
MEN	79,056	52,400	53,999
TOTAL	87,697	59,392	61,944
FEMALE REPRESENTATION	9.9%	11.7%	12.8%

Although most restrictions on the employment of women have been lifted since 1989, Combat related Military occupations (Combat arms, Naval operations and pilots) still show particularly low level of participation as more than 80% of the female Officer population is still employed in support related occupations. Table 2 is a breakdown of Female Regular Force Officer Representation by Military Occupation.

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<sup>16</sup> Kevin Vivian, *From the Past and into the Future: Gender Integration in the Canadian Armed Forces 1970-1999*, Report Prepared for the Directorate of Military Gender Integration and Employment Equity (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1998), 13.

<sup>17</sup> On May 17<sup>th</sup> 2006, Capt Nichola Goddard was Canada's First woman to die in a combat role.

<sup>18</sup> Canada, Chief Military Personnel, *Canadian Forces National Rapport to the Committee for Women in NATO Forces* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2006), 5; [http://www.nato.int/ims/2006/win/pdf/canada\\_national\\_report\\_2006.pdf](http://www.nato.int/ims/2006/win/pdf/canada_national_report_2006.pdf); Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

**Table 2: Female Regular Force Officer Representation by Military Occupation (1989-2006)<sup>19</sup>**

MILITARY OCCUPATION GROUP	1989	2003	2006
General Officers	0.7%	1.4%	2.7%
Naval Operations	1.4%	10.9%	10.7%
Maritime Engineering	1.8%	9.8%	10.3%
Combat Arms	0.3%	3.8%	3.8%
Air Operations – Pilot	1.5%	3.6%	3.6%
Air Operations	7.1%	12.0%	12.7%
Aerospace Engineering	6.8%	14.7%	16.6%
Engineering	6.2%	11.8%	11.4%
Medical and Dental	41.8%	43.1%	44.0%
Chaplaincy	3.1%	12.8%	12.7%
Support	17.9%	16.6%	24.9%
Officer Cadets – Unassigned	15.4%	17.0%	26.0%
TOTAL	9.3%	12.1%	14.8%

In comparison with other NATO and TTCP<sup>20</sup> countries, Canada is a leader in the integration of female in terms of breadth (by environment and occupation), the level of participation, and HR policies. Furthermore, in a study conducted by the United States comparing numbers serving, limitations on military units, occupations and policies, Canada has been recognized as the most integrated Defence force.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, being the world leader does not presume that complete integration has been accomplished.

Table 1 shows that only a 3% increase in female representation has been achieved in the

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>20</sup> The Technical Cooperation Program (TTCP) is an international organization that collaborates in defence scientific and technical information exchange; program harmonization and alignment; and shared research activities. It includes the following countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States. The Technical Cooperation Program; Internet; <http://www.dtic.mil/ttcp>; accessed 17 April 2007.

<sup>21</sup> David Segal, Mady Wechsler-Segal and Bradford Booth, “Gender and Sexual Orientation Diversity in Modern Military Forces: Cross-National Patterns,” In *Beyond Zero Tolerance*, ed. by Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Judith Reppy, 225-250 (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 231. In a study conducted in 1996, eighteen nations were rank-ordered with regard to both gender integration and sexual orientation integration in the military. Correlation between the two processes of incorporating non-traditional sources of personnel into the military tend to be similar cross-national. Highest degree of integration was found in Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark.

last 15 years, far from the 25% target women representation.<sup>22</sup> Although the attrition rate of both men and women has been decreasing in the last few years and female attrition is currently only marginally higher than male attrition, the primary concern is the continued trend for non-traditional military occupation groups to be higher than the average. This is particularly true for female officers and NCMs serving in Regular Force Combat Arms and Naval operations.<sup>23</sup>

**Table 3: Rate of Attrition – Female and Male Officers (2001-2005)** <sup>24</sup>

	Female	Attrition	Male	Attrition
<b>2004-2005</b>	2187	5.1%	12898	4.7%
<b>2003-2004</b>	2144	5.6%	12708	4.6%
<b>2002-2003</b>	2064	6.0%	12549	5.1%
<b>2001-2002</b>	1952	4.3%	12191	4.8%

**Table 4: Average Attrition Rates by Occupational Group (1989-2001)** <sup>25</sup>

OCCUPATIONAL GROUP	OFFICERS		NCMS	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
<b>Combat Arms</b>	12.5%	6.2%	25.1%	9.2%
<b>Naval Ops/Techs</b>	12.9%	6.8%	14.2%	7.5%
<b>Air Ops/Tech</b>	8.7%	7.6%	6.2%	6.7%
<b>Engineering/Comms</b>	8.7%	7.8%	9.0%	7.3%
<b>Medical</b>	9.2%	9.7%	8.7%	7.5%
<b>Support</b>	7.2%	7.2%	7.6%	7.5%

<sup>22</sup> Representation and recruiting goals are different for each element. The Army's recruiting and representation goal is 25%, Air Force is 29% and the Navy is 40%. Lisa Tanner, *Gender Integration in the Canadian Forces – A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis*, Report Prepared for the Directorate of Military Gender Integration & Employment Equity (Ottawa: Department Of National Defence, 1999), 29.

<sup>23</sup> Lisa Tanner, *Gender Integration in the Canadian Forces – A Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis*, Report Prepared for the Directorate of Military Gender Integration & Employment Equity (Ottawa: Department Of National Defence, 1999), 58. In 1997, women were 3-4 times more likely to leave the combat arms and twice as likely to leave the Navy then their male equivalent.

<sup>24</sup> J.G Currie, "Attrition Patterns of Female Members of the Canadian Forces, Regular Force, 2001-02 Through 2004-05", Briefing note prepared by DMGIEE 3-7 to provide updated attrition data, prepared 26 April 2005, obtained via personal e-mail.

<sup>25</sup> Nikki Holden, *Female Attrition From the Canadian Forces*", Briefing Note prepared by DMGIEE 3-9 to provide updated attrition data subsequent to the 1999 study conducted by Lisa Tanner, prepared 24<sup>th</sup> April 2002, obtained via personal e-mail.

Retention of women in the military, specifically in the non-traditional occupations, is a critical factor in achieving full gender integration. As the CF continues its efforts to fully integrate women, it should be of some concern that women are leaving at a significantly higher rate than men in non-traditional occupations. If the recent efforts to increase the recruitment and retention of women have a chance in achieving the desired effect of raising female representation levels, they must be accompanied by appropriate and timely HR actions to identify and address the causes of higher female attrition.

### **WHY WOMEN LEAVE THE CF**

With the ongoing concerns associated with gender differences in attrition and the current focus on improving retention, there is renewed interest in quantifying the reasons for personnel to leave the military. A series of reports have been prepared dealing with CF attrition and two are specifically dealing with attrition rate of servicewomen. These reports contain valuable insight into why members, and specifically women, leave the CF. Generally, the reasons for leaving the military have not changed dramatically in the last ten years. Drs Canto and Kallway, in their report published in 2001, offer the following top ten reasons for leaving the military:

**Table 5: Top Ten Reasons Why CF Members Leave the Force<sup>26</sup>**

<b>REASONS GIVEN</b>	<b>%</b>
Avoid Family Separation	16.0
Back to School	15.5
Want more Challenging Work	14.9

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<sup>26</sup> Dr. Victor Canto and Dr. Kevin Kelloway, *Comprehensive Analysis of Canadian Forces Attrition Data, 1988-1999*, Report Prepared for Director Operational Research Personnel Operational Research Team and Directorate of Strategic Human Resource Coordination (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2001), 119.

Increased Family Stability (Est. roots in a community)	13.1
Capitalize on Pension	12.5
Better Paying Job	11.0
Too much Time Away from Home	10.7
Offered a Civilian Job with more Responsibilities	10.4
Unlikely to be promoted	6.3
CF Career Conflicts with Spouse's Career	4.6

In her three-year analysis review of the Canadian Forces Attrition Information Questionnaires, Lt-Col Patricia Brennan found similar reasons for women to leave the military but with important value differences.

**Table 6: Top Five Reasons Why CF Women Leave the Force<sup>27</sup>**

<b>REASONS GIVEN (May be more than one)</b>	<b>%</b>
Family Separation	27.4
Return to School	25.4
Stay at Home and Raise a Family	19.9
More Challenging Work	18.4
Conflict with Spouse Career	18.4

Interestingly, three of the top five reasons for women to leave the military can be directly linked to their family responsibilities. Although two of the reasons are also cited by men (Family separation and conflict with spouse), they are much less significant in the decision process for men to leave the CF. Another key factor to note is that almost 20% of women declared that they had left the CF to stay home and raise a family, a reason that did not even make the top ten reasons offered by departed men.

Additionally, a study conducted in 1994 to explore the relationship between organizational environment and exit among women who left the CF concluded that women overwhelmingly chose to leave the CF for gender-specific reasons which

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<sup>27</sup> LCol Patricia Brennan, "Storming the Rampart: Employment Equity and the Military" (master's thesis, University of Manitoba, 1999), 76.

reflected quality of life issues – both in terms of family responsibilities and personal well-being.<sup>28</sup>

The United States military has also recently conducted similar research and results of attrition data have yielded the following top three reasons for American women service members to leave the military: the lack of clear roles and careers paths, the differential treatment they received, and the difficulty in combining career and family.<sup>29</sup> A survey conducted after Desert Storm strongly indicated that retention of women in the Air Force was less related to the inevitable need for deployment than to the addressable issues of family support and work-life balance.<sup>30</sup>

In our society as a whole, one of the major obstacles to gender equality has been the failure of workplace and social institutions, historically organized around the male breadwinner model of the family, to keep pace with changing labour market trends. As an example, women's entry into the workforce has not significantly altered the allocation of responsibilities for domestic duties and childcare within the household. A Canadian study looking at the household division of labour between employed parents found that in most full-time, dual-earner families, the wife had primary responsibility for housework.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Karen D. Davis, "Organizational Environment and Turnover: Understanding Women's Exit from the Canadian Forces" (master's Thesis, McGill University, 1994), 81.

<sup>29</sup> S. Hosek, et al, *Minority and Gender Differences in Officer Career Progression* (Santa Monica: RAND Institute, 2001), 105.

<sup>30</sup> Penny F Pierce, "Retention of Air force Women Serving During Desert Shield and Desert Storm," *Military Psychology*, no. 3, (Spring 1998): 195.

<sup>31</sup> Canada, *Lessons Learned: Gender Equality in the Labour Market*, Technical Report prepared for Strategic Policy and Human Resources Development Canada (Ottawa, 2001), 6. In a survey conducted in 1998, 52% of wives employed full-time had all of the responsibility for daily housework, while 28% had most of the responsibility and only 10% of dual-earning couples shared housework responsibilities equally. Thus, this clearly shows that women continue to bear the main responsibilities for child care and household work.

Many women who engage in paid work are now confronting the “double day” syndrome and military servicewomen are facing the same challenges. As more than 50% of the women leave the military for family oriented reasons, to succeed as an “Employer of Choice”, it is essential for the CF to develop HR policies committed to improving the quality of life of children and families. Creating workplace policies more family friendly oriented will be critical to improve the retention of military servicewomen.

However, what is an “Employer of Choice”? The phrase has become quite popular lately, but many employers really do not fully understand the importance of the concept or how to realize it. It is more than just a catchy phrase; it is representative of a completely new design of corporate culture that an organization must take very seriously.<sup>32</sup>

## THE CF AS AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

**An employer of Choice is an organization that outperforms its competition in the attraction, development and retention of people with business required talent, often through innovative and compelling human resource programs that benefit both employees and their organizations alike.<sup>33</sup>**

When it comes to people management, the Department of National Defence is just like any other organization. The Employer of Choice is an organization that will treat its people as strategic assets. The era of the highly skilled workforce is within the horizon and such personnel are predicted to become a scarce commodity. The challenge for

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<sup>32</sup> Roger Herman and Joyce Gioba, “Helping Your Organization Become an Employer of Choice,” *Employment Relations Today* (Summer 2001): 63.

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Clark, “What Business are Doing to Attract and Retain Employees - Becoming an Employer of Choice,” *Employee Benefits Journal* (March 2001): 21.

every organization to retain such personnel underscores the importance of good human capability management. Many researchers have concluded that retention is much cheaper than recruiting.<sup>34</sup> For the past few years, “Putting the People First” has been the top priority identified by the CDS in his annual report. The CF has begun to better acknowledge the impact of military service on member’s personal lives. Concurrently, CF members have been seeking increased flexibility in exercising personal choice.<sup>35</sup>

From the outset, organizations need to define what being an EOC means to them. The definition phase is an opportunity for the establishment to identify why it wants to be an EOC as well as pinpoint the internal drivers that will enable it to succeed. The drivers behind being an EOC are employee driven, they are the key components that attract people to an employer or encourage them to remain.<sup>36</sup> Today’s employees are sending a clear message to their employers: they want a life as well as their job. The Canada@work Study conducted by Aon Human Capital Consulting Firm reveals that for the second year running, Canadian workers have said that companies’ recognition of employees’ personal lives remains the strongest reason to be committed to an organization. Without satisfying employees’ basic needs – their physical and emotional security – further investment in the areas such as reward and compensation, pride and

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<sup>34</sup> The actual cost of losing and replacing an employee is between 50-150% of the salary of the leaving employee. Pam Withers, “The Six Secrets to Attracting and Retaining Great Employers”, *CMA Management* (October 2001), 25.

<sup>35</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Putting People First – The HR-Mil Perspective*, Director of Strategic Human Resources (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2005); [http://hr3.ottawa-hull.mil.ca/dstrahr-drhstrat/engraph/0301PuttingPeopleFirst\\_e.asp](http://hr3.ottawa-hull.mil.ca/dstrahr-drhstrat/engraph/0301PuttingPeopleFirst_e.asp); Internet; accessed 5 Mar 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Hannah Olsen, “Employer of Choice – What it Means,” *Best Practice Measurement Strategies* Vol 1, issue 7, (September 2001): 7.

spirit programs and individual employee growth, will not achieve the expected return on investments. Money is not everything; a better work-life balance is.<sup>37</sup>

Analyses of organizations recognized as EOC have yielded that the top five EOC retention strategies are training, tuition reimbursement, flexible work arrangement, sabbaticals, and extended parent leave.<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that the last three retention strategies can be directly linked to work-life balance. The CF, as a reflection of Canadian society, is not isolated from these organizational challenges and must also implement innovative and flexible initiatives to assist its members with work-family balance if it wants to remain a competitive employer. Since each and every talented, fully-trained and experienced person that can be convinced and encouraged to remain in the CF equals ten people that need to be attracted, enrolled, and trained.<sup>39</sup> It is absolutely essential that every possible effort be made for the CF to become the kind of working environment where this pool of talent wants to remain and better work-life balance policies and programs is one way of achieving this objective.

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<sup>37</sup> Aon Risk Management, Reinsurance, Human Capital Consulting, "Canada@Work Study Reveals Companies Slow to Make Employees' Work/Life Harmony a Priority"; [http://www.aon.com/about/news/press\\_release?pr\\_00721E.jsp](http://www.aon.com/about/news/press_release?pr_00721E.jsp); Internet; accessed 27 February 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Leigh Branham, "Planning to Become an Employer of Choice," *Journal of Organization Excellence* (Summer 2005): 58.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Ankerson and Losel Tethong, "Retain or Perish: Why Recruiting Won't Save the CF," *Strategic Datalink*, no. 95, (March 2001): 3.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE

**Work-Life balance isn't the soft option. It's about employers and employees working together to find out how they can both gain from a more imaginative approach to working practices... The workplace has altered dramatically over the past decade and old methods are no longer appropriate as employers accept that their most valuable assets is their workforce...if you as an employer are failing to address these issues, you are placing your business at a distinct disadvantage.**

**Margaret Hodge, UK Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities<sup>40</sup>**

In the last twenty years, time spent on the job in a given year has increased by 163 hours – roughly one month per year- while leisure has declined by one-third.<sup>41</sup>

Additionally, although technology has afforded productivity gains to many, it has also blurred the lines between work and home, as more personnel are using remote Internet/Blackberry tools to complete uncompensated work during evenings and weekends. It is not surprising then, that role overload and work to family interference have become commonplace and have had a significant adverse effect on employee production, morale and retention.<sup>42</sup> But what is work-life balance, and how does it associate with employee quality of life? Work-life balance is defined as our respective ability to juggle a set number of work and non-work roles such as mother, daughter, employee, boss or spouse. Work-life conflict occurs when the cumulative demands of work and non-work life roles are incompatible in some respect so that participation in one

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<sup>40</sup> Todd, Sheri, *Improving Work-Life Balance – What Are Other Countries Doing?* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2004), 19.

<sup>41</sup> Pam Withers, “The Six Secrets to Attracting and Retaining Great Employers,” *CMA Management* (October 2001): 25.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

role is threatens the other role. Employees subjected to high levels of work-life conflict are likely to miss more workdays per year, will be less committed to the organization, are less satisfied with their job, and are more inclined to intend to leave their job. Ultimately, all aspects of work-life conflict negatively affect both the individual and the organization.<sup>43</sup>

The following table is the result of a survey conducted in the National Capital Region on more than 300 employed mothers and illustrates the top initiatives that employers could do to help employees balance work and family.

**Table 7: What Could Your Employer do to Help Balance Work and Family?**<sup>44</sup>

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Flexible Work Hours	23.0
Increased Family Leave	20.0
On-Site Day-Care	18.9
Supervisors understanding of work and family	17.4
Shorter Hours	15.1
Work At Home	14.0
Part-time Job	9.8
Job Sharing	7.5

### **Flexible Work Arrangement**

Following the 1999 Speech from the Throne, the Federal government reinforced its commitment to improving the quality of life of children and families and making its own workplace policies and those of federally regulated workplaces more family friendly. Since 1999, initiatives that foster family friendly workplaces have broadened to

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<sup>43</sup> Todd, Sheri, *Improving Work-Life Balance – What Are Other Countries Doing?* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2004), 9.

<sup>44</sup> Lee, Catherine, Linda Duxbury, and Christopher Higgins, *Employed Mothers: Balancing Work and Family Life*, Report Prepared for The Canadian Centre For Management Development (Ottawa: CCMD, 2004), 20.

include flexible work arrangements that support a positive balance between work and personal life.<sup>45</sup> The following table is the Treasury Board approved policies for flexible work arrangement in the Public Service.

**Table 8: Public Service Flexible Work Arrangements<sup>46</sup>**

<b>Policy/Program</b>	<b>Description</b>
Part-Time Work	Permanent position, but fewer hours/days than a regular work week
Job-Sharing	Full-time position with duties and responsibilities shared among two or more part-time employees
Flexible Hours of Work	Employee works standard number of hours per day, but has some choice in start and finish times
Compressed, or Variable Work Week	Extended hours per day in return for periodic days off
Telework	Work from home on a regular basis, but not necessarily every day

Flexible work arrangements are frequently promoted as beneficial to both employer and employee. On the one side, they help the employer by providing an opportunity to cover extended working hours. On the other, they benefit employees by giving them some control in organizing their work schedule around family demands. Flexible work arrangements can either restructure or reduce employees' work time.<sup>47</sup> While the research in this area is sparse and mostly qualitative, what is actually available

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<sup>45</sup> Canada, *Work-Life Balance in Canada- Chapter III: Non-Legislative Initiatives*, Report Prepared by the Ministers Responsible for Labour in Canada (Ottawa: 2002), 1; [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=/en/lp/spila/wlb/rtm/07chapter\\_4.pdf](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=/en/lp/spila/wlb/rtm/07chapter_4.pdf); Internet; accessed 1 March 2007.

<sup>46</sup> C. Evans, *Work-Life Balance in The Canadian Forces & Department of National Defence* Report Prepared by the Director Strategic Human Resources (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2004), 46.

<sup>47</sup> Canada, *Lessons Learned: Gender Equality in the Labour Market*, Technical Report prepared for Strategic Policy and Human Resources Development Canada (Ottawa, 2001), 70.

leads to the conclusion that the implementation of these types of policies can produce benefits for both employer and employee. These benefits include increased employee morale, commitment to the organization, enhanced ability to attract and retain key employees, reduce absenteeism, increased productivity and a reduction in employee stress level.<sup>48</sup> Although a study by Catalyst in the US found that flexible work does result in a “slowing down” of careers, it also enhances retention and allows women to maintain a career identity, professional skills, and career momentum.<sup>49</sup>

In the CF today, there are no formal policies or programs with respect to flexible work arrangement for Regular Force personnel. In many headquarters and static units, informal arrangements exist for flextime (variable start and end time), but these are normally at the discretion of management. Additionally, but even less commonly, some supervisors may occasionally approve telework or work from home. Depending on the existence for Class B and C service, Reserve Force members have the option to alternate between full-time and part-time employment. However, Reserve Force members experience a reduction in pay compared to Regular Force members and have no guarantee of future employment.<sup>50</sup>

The opportunities for growth in the sector of flexible work arrangement are enormous. Although the demands of the profession of arms place some limits on the

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<sup>48</sup> C. Evans, *Work-Life Balance in The Canadian Forces & Department of National Defence* Report Prepared by the Director Strategic Human Resources (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2004), 14.

<sup>49</sup> Canada, *Lessons Learned: Gender Equality in the Labour Market*, Technical Report prepared for Strategic Policy and Human Resources Development Canada (Ottawa, 2001), 75.

<sup>50</sup> C. Evans, *Work-Life Balance in The Canadian Forces & Department of National Defence* Report Prepared by the Director Strategic Human Resources (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2004), 42.

types of work-life programs that can be implemented, there is room for creative solutions which would support recruitment and retention without endangering operational effectiveness.<sup>51</sup> If the CF wishes to retain women and move towards a more global gender integration, more thought and attention needs to go into flexible work arrangement policy development.

## **Leave**

Provisions for leave is another of the main policy responses to the work-family conflict that greatly influences the desirability of a particular career for women. The CF benefits include the following leaves: annual, maternity and parental, special, compassionate, short and leave without pay (LOWP). Annual leave is based on years of service in the CF; maternity and parental follow Canadian government legislation and CF members, where both male and female members receive salary top-up to 93% for the full parental leave; special leave benefits are granted for academic advancement or community affairs; and compassionate leave is reserved for urgent and exceptional personal reasons which usually encompasses death of family member or a significant traumatic event. Finally, two days per month of short leave can be granted by a Commanding Officer as compensation for extended periods of work, to conduct urgent personal business or as a reward for exemplary work.<sup>52</sup>

Although these leave policies are extremely generous in comparison with the civilians sector, LWOP is one area that could be greatly improved. The current policy is that LWOP is only granted if deemed to be in the best interests of the CF, and must be

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> CF guideline as published in QR&O 16.26, 16.27 and CFAO 16-1.

approved by the CDS for periods exceeding 30 days. LWOP policy needs to be reevaluated in today's environment to determine its potential as a retention tool. As explained in the next section, many other militaries and civilian organizations use LWOP to allow women and men to leave work for extended periods to raise their families. To date, LWOP has mostly been used for spousal accompaniment on foreign posting and LWOP has never been awarded for the purpose of family care. Members having requested such leave were suggested to release from the military and re-join when their children were in school.<sup>53</sup> From a strictly short-term perspective, allowing LWOP for family reasons may have a negative impact on the CF but the introduction of this type of policy would, however, reduce the 20% of women leaving the military to raise families and should therefore receive more serious consideration.

LWOP for other reasons such as education leave or sabbatical should be made more available for CF members. Since 15% of men and 25% of women are leaving the military to return to school, granting LWOP for the entire education period is worthy of consideration as a retention measure. Additionally, as today's "generation X" workforce differs from their parents' as they work to live versus the live to work of the previous generation, sabbatical leave would allow workers to take a period of time off work to pursue other interests such as volunteering, community works or travel the world.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Based on personal experience. In 2003, a female pilot requested 5 years of LWOP to stay at home and raise her two children. Military official response was to suggest her to release and re-join the military when she was ready. She is now back in the workforce, but instead of re-enlisting in the military, she is working for a local Air Ambulance organization.

<sup>54</sup> Bradley Jorgenson, "Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y?: Policy Implications for Defence Forces in the Modern Era," *Foresight: The Journal Of Futures Studies, Strategic Thinking and Policy*, Vol 5, Issue 4, (2003): 42.

## Work-Life Balance Programs in Other Countries

The CF is not alone, many countries' militaries have concerns associated with the recruitment and retention of their military personnel; and, others, such as the Australian Defence Force, have taken the approach of becoming an EOC to survive. Some countries, such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Netherlands and Sweden actively endorse work-life balance as an explicit goal by developing specific legislation to address greater family balance.<sup>55</sup>

In April 2003, the UK government enacted legislation to help parents cope with work. Employees now have a right to apply for work flexibility options and employers have a statutory duty to consider these requests seriously. Arrangements requested can include working patterns such as annualized hours, compressed hours, flextime, job sharing, shift working, unpaid leave during school holidays, and staggered hours.<sup>56</sup>

Similarly, in the Netherlands, the Adjustment of Hours Law enacted in 2000 gives Dutch workers the right to request a shortening or lengthening of their normal working hours. As a rule, employers are required to grant such requests unless a substantive business reason to refuse exists. In practice, this law allows Dutch workers to work full time earlier on in their career, allows new parents to shift to a four day schedule when raising young children, allows them to return to full-time work as children get older and do not require as much parental supervision, and finally allows employees to shift down

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<sup>55</sup> Todd, Sheri, *Improving Work-Life Balance – What Are Other Countries Doing?* (Ottawa: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2004), 5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

to part-time work in the years leading to retirement.<sup>57</sup>

In Sweden, parental leave can be taken flexibly. The leave can be used until the children reach 8 years. Parental leave can also be used part-time if parents wish to work while caring for the child. Sabbatical leave allows workers to take a period of time off work to pursue other interests. An employee is entitled to take up to a year off work to study or look after kids.<sup>58</sup>

Progress within other militaries has also been remarkable. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) allows part-time regular force service and job sharing as service requirements permit. Furthermore, ADF members are eligible for 6 months of paid sabbatical leave for every 10 years of service. Likewise, the Belgium forces allow part-time and flexible working hours. In addition, members on career status may leave the service for periods of up to two years to pursue other interests. The Netherlands and New Zealand also offer part-time work for family reasons. In most countries, part-time employees might be recalled to full-time service with three months' notice; however, in such circumstances, individuals have the right to take their release instead. Finally, members of the Spanish Armed Forces are entitled to reduce their working day by up to half their working hours in order to care for dependants.<sup>59</sup>

It is clear that improving work-life balance is an important component of the policy agenda for many industrialized countries, their militaries' service included, and the issue is likely to become even more important in the future. The CF can learn from the

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>59</sup> C. Evans, *Work-Life Balance in The Canadian Forces & Department of National Defence* Report Prepared by the Director Strategic Human Resources (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2004), 40-41.

initiatives of other countries and services and determine whether these approaches could be adopted to suit the needs of CF members.

There are ample proofs that work-life balance initiatives benefit both the individual and the organization. These benefits include increased employee morale, commitment to the organization, enhanced ability to attract and retain key employees, reduce absenteeism, increased productivity and a reduction in employee stress level.<sup>60</sup> More importantly for the CF, it enables women to maintain a career identity, professional skills, and career momentum while balancing other priorities such as raising a family.

## **CONCLUSION**

As the traditional white Anglophone male military applicant pool in Canada is projected to decrease in proportion to a broader potential applicant pool, and competition is expected to increase for skilled and motivated youth in the labour market, the future participation of women will be critical for the survival of the CF. As the CF is in direct competition with other organizations for skilled employees, achieving a recognized Employer of Choice status is essential for the CF existence. EOCs are family-friendly employers that care about the welfare of their personnel as well as organizations that are placing HR emphasis on issues such as a motivational work environment, a compatible work culture, and an appropriate work/life balance.

Research indicates that there are many reasons why women leave the military. However, the main cause remains the organization's inflexibility in helping women to manage both their career and their personal life, leading more than 40% of women to leave the military. Recent literature confirms that balancing work and family is a

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

considerable challenge to women, and that the organization must be adaptive to their needs. It has been the intent of this paper to argue that to reach a recognized EOC status, the CF must implement better work-life balance policies. Flexible employment opportunities and leave reform were specifically address as two great innovative ways to increase the retention of women and, at the same time get closer to total gender integration in the CF.

Although the unique demands of the profession of arms places limits on the CF's ability to implement work-life balance programs, members of the CF are drawn from the larger Canadian society, and as a result, the CF must remain cognizant of social changes and developments within the larger society. Conversely, the CF is not alone on the work to achieve a better work-life balance for its members. Other countries and militaries have already implemented a variety of work-life programs. The objective in investigating these leading edge organizations was to provide an overview of their practices and strategies so that we can learn from them and decide whether similar practices can be effective within the CF. The CF is not isolated from these environmental challenges and must also support workforce development, enhance quality of life for its employees and ensure the recruitment and retention of a quality workforce. Each organization is different and what works in one organization may not work in another. However, the CF can learn from the initiatives of other countries and determine whether these approaches could be adopted to suit our own needs.

If "Putting the People First" is truly a priority, the organization must develop flexible HR policies and practices and remain adaptable to constant and rapid change in the workplace environment. We must accept that there is no single right way, no single

panacea, and that we must design, develop, and maintain a culture that “fits” the CF of today and tomorrow. If retention strategies are more important than recruitment strategies for the long term survival of the CF, every possible effort should be made to making the CF the kind of place where CF trained and skilled members want to remain.

Women have played a key role in the proud history of Canada’s military. To ensure that they have the chance to continue to do so as our society continues to progress, it is essential that the CF take the necessary steps to recruit and retain a large and talented segment of the population. If we do not, we can be certain that others will. Can the CF of today and tomorrow afford this risk?

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