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**Major Patrick Horsman**

**“Old Stock” Continues to Yield Poor Returns:  
Is It Time for the CAF to Invest in Global Talent Market?**

**JCSP 47**

**Exercise Solo Flight**

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## **“OLD STOCK” CONTINUES TO YIELD POOR RETURNS: IS IT TIME FOR THE CAF TO INVEST IN GLOBAL TALENT MARKET?**

To improve is to change, to be perfect is to change often

– Winston Churchill

When it comes to recruitment of personnel to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) it is increasingly clear that something must change. Since 1990, the size of the CAF has been in steady decline; the number of CAF members has consistently decreased year over year or remained stagnant save for a large surge in 2004 at the height of the Afghanistan campaign. In 1990 official statistics placed the size of the force at 87,000 personnel whereas more recent numbers from 2018 record a force size of 72,000, which is a decrease of approximately 17%.<sup>1</sup> Although official statistics for 2021 are not yet available, exploration of staffing levels using access to Military Command Software (MCS) view indicates that the existing downward trend coupled with the recent Global Pandemic has had a large negative impact. A review of filled versus vacant positions indicates that the Regular Force is currently staffed at just 48,481 of 68,966 total positions (70%) and the Primary Reserve Force at just 22,484 of 45,808 (49%).<sup>2</sup> Suffice to say, the size of the CAF has shrunk considerably and is now at a critical juncture that will impact preparedness and readiness for decades to come without a substantial change to our personnel recruitment strategies.

From a reductionist perspective, the math on force attrition can be split into two distinct parts: a) failure to retain trained personnel in sufficient quantities; and b) failure

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<sup>1</sup> “Canadian military Size.” Macrotrends, accessed April 14, 2022, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CAN/canada/military-army-size>

<sup>2</sup> “Military Command Software View.” Government of Canada, accessed May 5, 2022, <https://mcs-lcm.forces.mil.ca/>

to recruit and train the required number of offsets for sustainment or growth. Several scholars have tackled the retention side of this equation and thus it is not the focus of this paper. A thorough examination was published by Major Bériault (2021) which addressed the usual systemic issues such as pay, job satisfaction, skill use, geographic mobility, work-life conflict, and outside opportunity.<sup>3</sup> Although retention issues are certainly a contributing factor, it is increasingly apparent that the core issue in current force attrition is a failure to recruit and process new members in sufficient quantities to reconstitute the force. While the CAFs historical attrition rate remains stable at approximately 6-7% annually<sup>4</sup> it has not recruited more than 5,171 Regular Force personnel in any given year since 2018, with performance in the past two years predictably lower.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, with only 8,500 applications to join the CAF currently open, over 50% of which will be screened out during the process, it is exceptionally clear the CAF has either an attraction or eligibility for service problem.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, there are several indicators that this downward trend will continue if no direct policy changes or new recruitment strategies are implemented. Canada is experiencing ongoing population aging, which is defined as an increasing percentage of citizens in the over 65 age cohort, driven primarily by a low birth rate.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Canada's eligible applicant pool as a percentage of the population is shrinking although

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<sup>3</sup> Major Kim A. Bériault. "Retention in the Canadian Armed Forces: A Complex Problem That Requires Active and Continued Management," *Canadian Forces College* (2021), <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/23/286/Beriault.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> "Military Command Software View."

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> Susan A. McDaniel and Julia Rozanova. "Canada's Aging Population (1986) Redux." *Canadian Journal on Aging* 30, no. 3 (Sep 2011): 511-521. <http://cafvl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/canadas-aging-population-1986-redux/docview/896471263/se-2?accountid=10524>

the overall population continues to grow.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, some reports suggest that the self-confidence and overall values of younger Canadian's are a good fit for CAF service<sup>9</sup> yet fewer young people are applying to join; which begs the question, why? There is some evidence from allied countries that as high as 70% of young adults are not even *eligible* to join for fitness, medical, or educational reasons.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, today's young adults tend to be less invested in politics compared to previous generations<sup>11</sup> and are less likely to describe themselves as patriotic or convey nationalist interests.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, ongoing issues with diversity, harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour, and leader misconduct has soured public opinion amongst many groups of diverse Canadians.<sup>13</sup> Although the Government of Canada is taking action on this front, it will take considerable investment to turn the tide of public opinion.

Simply put, a continued reliance on what some conservative politicians have termed "old-stock" Canadians (i.e., white, cisgender, straight males) to meet the needs of

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<sup>8</sup> "Canadian Population Growth." Macrotrends, accessed April 14, 2022

<https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/CAN/canada/population-growth-rate>

<sup>9</sup> Reginald W. Bibby. "Canada's Emerging Millennials." *Transition* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 2-6.

[https://search.ebscohost-](https://search.ebscohost.com/cfvl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=44707162&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[com/cfvl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=44707162&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/cfvl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=44707162&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Spoehr and Bridget Handy. "The Looming National Security Crisis: Young Americans Unable to Serve in the Military." *The Heritage Foundation* (Feb 13, 2018).

<https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/the-looming-national-security-crisis-young-americans-unable-serve-the-military>

<sup>11</sup> Amy Mitchell, Jeffrey Gottfried, and Katerina Eva Matsa. "Political Interest and Awareness Lower Among Millennials." *Pew Research Center* (June 1, 2015).

<https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2015/06/01/political-interest-and-awareness-lower-among-millennials/>

<sup>12</sup> Paul Taylor, Carroll Doherty, Kim Parker, and Vidya Krishnamurthy. "Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with friends." *Pew Research Center* (March 7, 2014).

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/>

<sup>13</sup> Kristy Kirkup. "Sexual-misconduct crisis in military affecting recruitment to Canadian Armed Forces, official says." *The Globe and Mail* (March 23, 2022). [https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-sexual-misconduct-crisis-in-military-affecting-recruitment-to-canadian/#:~:text=Watchlist-)

[sexual-misconduct-crisis-in-military-affecting-recruitment-to-canadian/#:~:text=Watchlist-Sexual%2Dmisconduct%20crisis%20in%20military%20affecting%20recruitment.Canadian%20Armed%20Forces%2C%20official%20says&text=Sexual%20misconduct%20in%20the%20military\\_head%20of%20military%20personnel%20says](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-sexual-misconduct-crisis-in-military-affecting-recruitment-to-canadian/#:~:text=Watchlist-Sexual%2Dmisconduct%20crisis%20in%20military%20affecting%20recruitment.Canadian%20Armed%20Forces%2C%20official%20says&text=Sexual%20misconduct%20in%20the%20military_head%20of%20military%20personnel%20says)

the CAF is no longer viable. When mixed together the ongoing reduction in the viable applicant pool in the target demographic combined with the military becoming less of an employer of choice has drastically reduced the number of potential applicants for service. Therefore, given the existing negative growth trends and predictions that it will continue, the CAF must consider a radical policy change in order to meet future growth targets and operational outputs. More specifically, the Government of Canada should invest in a new recruitment portfolio and allow non-Canadian citizens to serve in the CAF to better capitalize on diversity and population growth due to immigration. Thus, what follows is a proposed policy framework for incorporating non-citizens into the CAF and analysis of the potential impacts.

### **The Need to Grow: Why and How?**

The need for the Canadian Armed Forces to grow cannot be understated. With 20,500 vacant positions presently and a commitment to grow the force by an additional 3,500 personnel enshrined in Canada's Defence Policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged*<sup>14</sup> the outlook is bleak. Furthermore, while most core occupations (e.g. INFTR) are staffed at around 80-85% presently, many of the more technical occupations are far worse off; Weapons Engineering Technician is staffed at just 73% while Marine Technician only at 66%.<sup>15</sup> It is also worth noting that these raw counts are simply of names against positions and do not include training level or competency. Estimates from MCS place the CAF Trained Effective Strength (TES) at 75% of total personnel.<sup>16</sup> Not surprisingly, the need

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<sup>14</sup> "Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy." Government of Canada, June 10, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canada-defence-policy.html>

<sup>15</sup> "Military Command Software View."

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*

to reconstitute the force and drastically improve trained effective strength is recognized at the highest levels of the CAF. A recent Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) directive clearly states this need to all Level 1 Commanders and lower formations:

Mission: DND/CAF will continue to adapt to the rapidly changing situation of the pandemic in order to operate and reconstitute in a persistent COVID-19 environment, by properly accepting and managing risk, to minimize clusters and protect operational effectiveness.<sup>17</sup>

Reconstitution, despite the Global Pandemic, is of the utmost priority to the CAF. The need to change, adapt, and grow the force has also been enshrined in strategic planning documents such as the Canadian Army's (CAs) FORCE 2025, which mandates ready force levels and changes to the occupational training model in order to achieve reconstitution aims.<sup>18</sup> Army readiness has also been examined from an academic perspective. Service papers, such as that of Major Douglas Russell, concretely argue that true strategic readiness cannot be achieved using current approaches such as the Road to High Readiness (RTHR) when combined with our existing Force Structures and staffing levels across the CA.<sup>19</sup> It is abjectly impossible to field a ready force without sufficient trained effective strength.

If we accept that the CAF *must* grow and that the current systemic constraints on interest, eligibility, and processing throughput cannot meet this need then the fundamental question becomes *how*. This paper has previously established that a) the Population of Canada is growing despite a low birth rate; b) that the eligible applicant

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<sup>17</sup> "CDS/DM Directive on DND/CAF Operating and Reconstituting in a Persistent COVID-19 Environment." Government of Canada, February 25, 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/dm-cds-directives/cds-dm-directive-dnd-caf-operating-reconstituting-persistent-covid-19-environment.html>

<sup>18</sup> "Force 2025." Government of Canada, January 18, 2022, <http://www.army-armee.forces.gc.ca/en/army-narrative/force2025/index.page>

<sup>19</sup> Major Douglas Russell. "Canadian Army strategic readiness" – How can we improve? *Canadian Forces College* (2018). <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/405/192/russell.pdf>

pool of Canadian Citizens, expressed as a percentage of that population, is shrinking; and c) that military service is not as attractive a career choice as it once was which further limits the applicant pool. A cursory review of this information points to leveraging immigration as one potential answer. Statistical data clearly demonstrates that population growth in Canada is predominantly driven by Immigration.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, the baseline eligibility to join the CAF currently requires the applicant to be the following: 1. A Canadian Citizen; 2. At least 18 years of age; and 3. To have completed at least a Grade 10 education.<sup>21</sup> Of these, only loosening citizenship requirements sufficiently broadens the applicant pool while simultaneously meeting political and strategic aims. Currently, non-citizens can only get a waiver to join the CAF if they have specific and highly skilled former service and training from an allied nation (e.g. are a UK trained Artillery Sergeant) or are applying for a highly technical vacant occupation for which they are already trained and licensed (e.g. Pilot, Doctor). Despite these requirements there is both anecdotal and academic evidence that new immigrants often have a strong desire to serve their newfound countries and communities through military service.<sup>22</sup> In this context, relaxing Citizenship requirements to serve in the CAF could rightly be viewed as a win-win for both Canada and the new immigrant.

### **Service for Citizenship**

The idea of allowing non-citizens to serve in the CAF has previously been discussed on both political and editorial platforms. In May 2018, CBC news reported on

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<sup>20</sup> "Canadian Population Growth."

<sup>21</sup> "Am I Eligible?" Government of Canada, April 14, 2022, <https://forces.ca/en/apply-now/>

<sup>22</sup> For example, see Wong, Cara, Grace Cho, Taeku Lee, S. Karthick Ramakrishnan, and Ricardo Ramírez. "Jus Meritum: Citizenship for Service." *Transforming politics, transforming America: The political and civic incorporation of immigrants in the United States* (2006): 71-88.



initial discussions at the Ministerial and Cabinet level surrounding the idea of recruiting non-skilled foreign nationals for service in the CAF<sup>23</sup> but there have been no further updates since. Supporting this idea, several allied countries have enacted service for citizenship policies or outright allow non-citizens to serve under various conditions. The British Army allows applicants from commonwealth countries, the United States those who hold Green cards, and the French Foreign legion accepts applicants from all nationalities.<sup>24</sup> Germany has adopted a more conservative approach, recruiting only from within European Union countries and only for technical specialist roles.<sup>25</sup> Ireland, Luxemburg, Denmark, and Belgium also have similar policies.<sup>26</sup> Of these options, this paper proposes the following hybrid approach, most akin to that of the United States, for use in Canada:

1. As part of the immigration application and visa process a potential applicant identifies themselves as wishing to participate in the CAF Expedited Citizenship Program.
2. Reliability Status and background checks for applicants with Foreign Implications are conducted, which typically requires a through security examination which includes verification from foreign agencies. Upon completion, Landed Immigrant status is granted. The remainder of the CAF recruiting process can be conducted simultaneously.
3. After a pre-determined period of service, full citizenship is granted.

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<sup>23</sup> Kathleen Harris. "Military looks at foreign recruits to boost ranks." *CBC News* (May 25, 2018). <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/caf-military-foreign-recruits-1.4675889>

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>25</sup> Ben Knight. "Non-citizen soldiers in Germany: What you need to know." *Deutsche Welle* (Dec 27, 2018) <https://www.dw.com/en/non-citizen-soldiers-in-germany-what-you-need-to-know/a-46877642>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

As this process is most similar to that of the US, their analyses are likewise most applicable. An all-encompassing report on citizenship for service in the US by CNA Corporation (2005) identified racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity in the military as a primary benefit of the US non-citizen program.<sup>27</sup> Non-Citizens also tend to be retained longer than their less diverse home-grown counterparts, which helps with both sides of the growth equation mentioned above.<sup>28</sup> From the immigrant's perspective, this arrangement is also quite beneficial as it offers near-immediate employment and earning potential, higher skill use compared to entry level minimum-wage occupations, and ultimately full citizenship rights at culmination.<sup>29</sup>

Service for citizenship programs are not without their challenges, most of which manifest during the recruiting process itself. It will, on occasion, be difficult to verify education equivalency or professional certifications from foreign countries, but globalization is largely solving this problem in parallel as the world becomes more connected.<sup>30</sup> Language proficiency has also been a challenge in the US context, but this can be remedied with a language proficiency test or special language program for new immigrants while they await the required reliability status results.<sup>31</sup> This is also a two-sided coin, as it often means that those applicants have a first-language proficiency which could be of benefit during military employment. While one might expect that Reliability Status process to also be more cumbersome, in reality it would not deviate from current

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<sup>27</sup> Anita U. Hattiangadi, Aline O. Quester, Gary Lee, Diana S. Lien, and Ian D. MacLeod. Non-Citizens in Today's Military: Final Report. *CNA Corporation* (April, 2005): 1.

[https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/PDF/D0011092.A2.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/D0011092.A2.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Burk, James. "Citizenship Status and Military Service: The Quest for Inclusion by Minorities and Conscientious Objectors." *Armed Forces and Society* 21, no. 4 (1995): 503-529.

<sup>30</sup> Anita Hattiangadi, "Non-Citizens," 28.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

practice for citizens who are identified as having foreign implications due to living aboard or family relationships. If anything, further development of this policy may spur on additional changes which further enhance Canada's national ability to receive, analyze, and vet reliability status applications at a higher standard.

### **Risks & Opportunities**

Policy changes are, however, never without risk. In this instance, the proposed policy exposes risk in three key areas: Political, Legal, and Security. Political risks are best described as those which divide across party lines, and Immigration is certainly a partisan issue. The currently-in-power Liberal party of Canada, for instance, has expressed that they welcome “modest and responsible increases to immigration, with a focus on ... highly skilled people who can help build a stronger Canada”<sup>32</sup> and that they wish to “streamline express entry, giving the immigration minister more authority to select permanent resident candidates who best meet the needs of the labour market.”<sup>33</sup> Conversely, the Conservative party of Canada has had to contend with significant intra-party conflict on this issue with many Conservative Party MPs wishing to curtail immigration.<sup>34</sup> The NDP have taken the opposite stance, wishing to remove all caps, quotas, or barriers.<sup>35</sup> Thusly, and depending on the political power structures of the Government at any given time, enacting new immigration policy tied to service in the CAF and diversity goals may prove challenging for any Government.

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<sup>32</sup> Hugo O'Doherty. “Where do Canada's political parties stand on immigration?” Moving 2 Canada, August 16, 2021, <https://moving2canada.com/canadian-political-parties-immigration/>

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*

Legal risks perhaps prove the most challenging in this context and can be further separated into two categories: *liability* (on behalf of the Government) and *process* (via Supreme Court). Liability risks are those where the government may be held responsible for the impacts of errors, omissions, delays, or sudden changes to standing policies which have an adverse impact on the immigrant.<sup>36</sup> Process risks are those where the Government fails to enact the necessary legislative and regulatory framework to support and protect the immigration process; errors which typically results in Supreme Court challenges, unforecasted financial costs, and lengthy delays.<sup>37</sup> Significant legal efforts and coordination will be required in order to enact a service-for-citizenship policy which protects the rights and freedoms of the prospective citizen and the liability and costs to Canada.

Security risks are those which pose a material threat to Canada and are most likely to receive the attention and scrutiny of the general public.<sup>38</sup> There is a longstanding, inflated belief amongst right-wing pundits that refugee and immigration programs are used extensively by bad-actors or terrorists to migrate to target Western countries, but this is largely unsupported by the literature.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, if such vulnerabilities exist in the current immigration program, they should be resolved for their own sake as the screening process required for this proposed policy change utilizes the existing processes required for immigration and Reliability Status background checks. The only substantive difference is time; rather than waiting 3-6 years after the immigration process to establish

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<sup>36</sup> Margaret M. Lee, Ruth E. Wasem, and Service. "Expedited Citizenship through Military Service: Current Law, Policy and Issues." *Library of Congress Washington, DC Congressional Research* (2009).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Stoffman. "Truths and Myths about Immigration." *Immigration Policy and the Terrorist Threat in Canada and the United States* (2008): 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*

citizenship and then apply to join the CAF it would happen immediately. If instituting a service-for citizenship policy results in a more thorough and robust security screening process for immigrants and applicants to the program it would be duly beneficial for Canadian security.

While there are certainly risks associated with making broad policy changes, there are also viable risk mitigations, and the resulting opportunities would be substantial. Here are three theoretical benefits outside of military growth that a service-for-citizenship program might offer:

*Interdepartmental Efficiency.* Currently the security background and identity verification of an immigrant would be reviewed at least three times throughout the entire process: upon filing for immigration<sup>40</sup> at the time of applying for citizenship<sup>41</sup> and during the mandatory background checks conducted as part of the CAF application process.<sup>42</sup> Each review requires significant time and resources from various departments. Under a well-structured program these reviews would be consolidated to a single officer at a single point in time, thus saving resources down the line and simultaneously improving the quality of information available to the recruiting system.

*Lowered demand on social programs.* The government of Canada currently offers several social programs to support new immigrants, including financial support, language training, settlement assistance, job search support, and skills training.<sup>43</sup> From this perspective, the costs of creating a service-for-citizenship program would be offset by the

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<sup>40</sup> “Security screening for immigration and citizenship applications” Government of Canada, June 27, 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/security-intelligence-service/services/security-screening-for-immigration-and-citizenship-applications.html>

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>42</sup> “Steps to Join.” Government of Canada, accessed May 27, 2022, <https://forces.ca/en/how-to-join/#st>

<sup>43</sup> “Settlement Program.” Government of Canada, April 12, 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/program-terms-conditions/settlement.html>

decreased use of existing social programs. Furthermore, the new service member would also begin paying income tax and thus increase available resources for social programs indirectly through government funding.

*Skill Certification.* There is a well-established gap between the education and professional qualifications of immigrants in their native countries and their ability to use those skills post-immigration (e.g. Engineers, Doctors, Lawyers, Mechanics).<sup>44</sup> This occurs mainly because many professional careers require certification through professional organizations and skill transfer is complex. It would be mutually beneficial to accept additional risk on this front offer skill-certification as part of the military service commitment. Not only would those immigrants have stable careers during service, but it would also decrease the number of highly qualified immigrants that are stuck working in entry level jobs and offer the opportunity for fulfilling professional careers post-service once they are certified.

### **The Time to Invest**

The current situation in Canada is clear: it must reconstitute the Canadian Armed Forces and recruit large numbers of personnel at a time when military service is no longer considered to be choice employment by many citizens. Addressing this need requires a modern approach and making changes to national immigration policy is an attractive solution. A correctly implemented service-for citizenship program will benefit both the immigrant and the Government of Canada by providing a stable career and appropriate skill usage, attracting talent from the global market, improving global perception, and increasing diversity in the CAF which is also a current strategic goal. Most notably,

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<sup>44</sup> Guillermina Jasso, Mark R. Rosenzweig, and James P. Smith. "The earnings of US immigrants: World skill prices, skill transferability and selectivity." New York: Rand Corporation (2002).

however, a service-for-citizenship policy offers a realistic and effective means of growing the size of the Canadian Armed Forces and meeting strategic readiness objectives.

Simply put, our existing recruiting portfolio is not yielding the required returns for a safe and secure Canada of the future. Is it high time to invest in a new market?

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