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## All Ebb and No Flow: Personnel Instability in the Royal Canadian Navy

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**ALL EBB AND NO FLOW: PERSONNEL INSTABILITY IN THE RCN**

By Lieutenant-Commander F.C. Gransden

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## ABSTRACT

The challenge of recruiting and retaining the RCN's most valuable asset, its people, is significant. History has revealed that achieving and maintaining a workforce balance is evasive and difficult to manage, but is critical to achieve in order for the armed forces to deliver when the government seeks military action. The RCN needs personnel to fill the growing number of ships; however, it presently does not have enough trained people to fill the current fleet. Past and present recruiting inefficiencies have resulted in serious and enduring manning shortages in naval occupations. Insufficient recruiting in the past has created a significant capability gap, which continues to worsen as the pandemic continues to take hold on the available population. Analysis of specific RCN occupations reveal the present state of personnel deficiencies and challenges associated with restoring occupational stability in a period of fleet recapitalization. Present trends reveal the navy must continue to focus retention efforts that support a stable, balanced workforce, which at present is thinning out by choice. Close management of personnel is crucial as the RCN addresses shortcomings and attempts to restore most occupations to stable levels. This analysis suggests that if the personnel problem is not sufficiently addressed, the RCN will be required to tie up or decommission ships in the not-too-distant future.

## INTRODUCTION

*Everything we do depends on people. If we do not have people with the characteristics, the value sets and skill sets that we need, we simply will not succeed in doing anything for Canada. That is not an option we have.*<sup>1</sup>

- Retired Chief of Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier

“It’s a great time to be in the Navy” is a pitch often made by the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) in townhalls. Such comments are meant to get people excited about the future. Many serving members find these talks inspirational because sailors go to sea, away from families and kin for extended periods of time and demands from the institution are high. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the personal and professional aspects of being a sailor in the RCN. Why then, does the RCN suffer from insufficient manning across most occupations? If it is so great to be in the Navy, why do recent trends show that loss of personnel exceeds gains? Why does the appeal of being in the navy not resonate with the general public to garner consistent interest in joining the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)? Falling in at 120, Forbes magazine rated the RCN in its employer of choice list in 2019.<sup>2</sup> An impressive feat considering the potential for its employees to be placed into harm's way. At National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ), the plethora of organizations involved in the personnel generation of the CAF’s most valuable asset search for an answer.

In practical terms, the issue of sustainable forces is complex, dynamic and not amenable to easy solutions. Plenty of variables are at play, and the number of organizations involved make achieving this goal, complex and imperfect. Despite past efforts to rid the CAF of this dilemma, the problem remains elusive.

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<sup>1</sup> Senate of Canada, *Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence*, Issue 22 - Evidence, 30 May 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Military Family Magazine, “Navy Makes Forbes Canada Top Employers List,” last accessed 25 March 2021, [https://www.cmfmag.ca/duty\\_calls/navy-makes-forbes-canada-top-employers-list/](https://www.cmfmag.ca/duty_calls/navy-makes-forbes-canada-top-employers-list/).

To achieve a balanced force, equalization of personnel strength of any given occupation without reaching outside of the organization is an ideal. Though internal mechanisms exist to manage personnel internal to the CAF, the easiest and most effective way to achieve stability begins with attracting and recruiting, with dual emphasis on retention. Such a seemingly simple fix has proven difficult for the CAF.

The latest defence policy, *Strong Secure Engaged* (SSE), identifies recruiting and retention as a target area. It has exacerbated the personnel shortage dilemma with a declared intent to increase in force size to 71,500.<sup>3</sup> This growth is important in development of future capabilities while providing needed support to the health and welfare of CAF personnel.<sup>4</sup> SSE acknowledged recruiting difficulties in strong economic times. However, the CAF needs to adjust its expectations when civilian jobs compete for a finite supply of skilled workers.<sup>5</sup> As such, establishing an enduring, effective future RCN workforce remains elusive.

As part of the job, hardships and demands are placed upon CAF members. People joining the military receive unique training, education and experiences when compared to other public service options for Canadians.<sup>6</sup> Periods of military conflict, at least in terms of global warfare, have historically made recruiting easier. In the absence of such conflicts, there appears to be fewer Canadians interested in pursuing a military career. The CAF is a volunteer force and has to entice individual Canadians into military service, often in intensifying competition with civilian sectors for skilled and educated workers. That exacerbates the military's need to find ways to recruit and develop potential candidates for long term commitments to the CAF. The CAF, at the

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<sup>3</sup> Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>6</sup> Department of National Defence, *DAOD 5002-0, Military Personnel Requirements and Production*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2004).

moment, is a volunteer force with unlimited liability. That is a challenging proposition for most demographics making up the pool of potential candidates. Changing Canadian demographics make recruiting more difficult as the CAF competes for potential recruits in an active labour market.<sup>7</sup> The military must understand the challenges with attracting talent in the competitive civil and private sectors, and look to modern, innovative ways of enticing citizens into a service life.

The RCN is under-strength across most occupations. Overall, the RCN manages 7,527 positions, while 6,581 trained members fill those positions.<sup>8</sup> That leaves a shortfall of roughly 1,000 or twenty percent of desired manning. The solution to personnel deficiencies is complex and requires significant investments in time before many occupations recover from current gaps in manning levels.

For the RCN, shortages in manning are so severe that in some occupations, sufficient numbers will likely never be reached. People are not interchangeable. Costs associated with training alone are greater than the annual income received by the member and it takes years to create seasoned, experienced sailors capable of meeting all requirements of an occupation.<sup>9</sup> The addition of even one position, especially at the senior ranks, requires significant planning and investment in the generation of skills and experience needed to fill the position. The available

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<sup>7</sup> Auditor General of Canada, *National Defence - Military Recruiting and Retention*, Chapter 2 in Auditor General Status Report (January 2006), 55.

<sup>8</sup> Department of National Defence, *RCN Managed Workforce Health - Current TES vs Positions*, Ottawa: DND Canada, January 2021.

<sup>9</sup> David G. Allen, Phillip C. Bryant, and James M. Vardaman, "Retaining Talent: Replacing Misconceptions with Evidence-Based Strategies," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 24, no. 2 (2010): 48, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=5fa7a316-2c33-4d50-9d39-1845e5939e10%40pdc-v-sessmgr01&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=51827775&db=bth>.



talent pool is simply not large enough to satisfy any appetite for maintaining the status quo, let alone growth.

Recruitment and sustainability of personnel strength problems are hardly new to the CAF. Retired Captain (Navy) Wilfred Lund studied the post-Second World War period and determined that management of personnel and related policy were significant factors in the RCN's ability to send ships to sea. He reflected that the combat readiness and efficiency of a navy lies not in advanced machinery and technology, but in having the right number of sailors in the service when needed.<sup>10</sup> Operations and technology may change, but demand for capable personnel, especially to service the machines, remains constant.

Post-war expansion of RCN platforms, necessitating a more closely managed personnel plan than previously instituted, caused an imbalance in the workforce and ultimately affected naval capability. Manning and training deficiencies impacted long-term goals and internal coordination, which ultimately meant the RCN fell behind its defence commitments.<sup>11</sup> Despite an abundance of materiel, a fighting force's effectiveness is limited by insufficient manning, relevant training, and the subsequent processes that enable them.

The Canadian government was committed to NATO and anti-submarine escort duties. From 1946 to 1964, the RCN grew by 225 percent and the fleet increased in strength by a factor of five.<sup>12</sup> This over-extension of naval capability eventually required some creative, if not radical solutions, including decommissioning of ships or reducing fleet manning.<sup>13</sup> Simply put,

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<sup>10</sup> Wilfred G. Lund, "The Rise and Fall of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1945-1964: A Critical Study of the Senior Leadership" (dissertation, University of Victoria, 1999), 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 531.

<sup>13</sup> Wilfred G. Lund, "The Rise and Fall of the Royal Canadian Navy...", 334.

successive governments and senior leadership did not see the long-term effects of the short-sighted goals that rendered the RCN incapable of fulfilling its mandated duties.

The Cold War elevated the Canadian defence posture, but by its end another transformation in personnel strength challenged the CAF for several decades. By the early 1990s, Regular Force (RegF) strength was approximately 89,000, but a shift in funding, policy, and draw down of standing military forces in Europe reduced CAF strength by a significant margin.<sup>14</sup> The 1994 *Defence White Paper* set a new force strength of 60,000 to be achieved by 1999, which was managed by the infamous Force Reduction Plan (FRP) through early retirement or release of thousands of trained, effective members.<sup>15</sup> The influence of the political and economic landscape had an enduring effect on workforce balance that is still being managed today.

In 2006, recruiting began again when the Conservative government looked to increase the size of the CAF to 68,000 in order to accommodate operational commitments both internationally and domestically.<sup>16</sup> The CAF's response was initiation of OPERATION CONNECTION, a directive to "revitalize [the] recruiting culture... [via] a more robust and cohesive recruiting strategy."<sup>17</sup> Central to this directive was the attraction campaign, which focused on several national activities including the Calgary Stampede and 2010 Olympics. This recruiting initiative proved successful in decreasing gaps in force strength, and despite increased attrition, numbers brought in were relatively high for several years. Overall, OPERATION CONNECTION proved successful in temporarily balancing the workforce, while highlighting to

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<sup>14</sup> Government of Canada, "Recruiting and Retention in the Canadian Forces," last accessed 23 January 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/news/archive/2010/05/recruiting-retention-canadian-forces.html>

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

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> R.F. Keller, "Is There a Link Between Canadian Forces Recruiting, Diversity and Immigration?" (Master of Defence Studies Course Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2007), 27 and Department of National Defence, *CDS OPO /06 OP CONNECTION* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2006).

Canadians that the air force and navy existed alongside a heavily publicized army that enjoyed significant media coverage from the mission in Afghanistan and domestic operations related to floods, ice storms, and forest fires. Personnel recovery, however, was short lived because workforce stability proved elusive over the long term.

## **REPORTING THE NUMBERS**

Several reports and reviews on recruiting and retention in the CAF have identified potential solutions to underlying problems of personnel shortages. Three significant reports performed by the Auditor General of Canada on recruiting and retention in the CAF highlighted specific areas in the force generation and sustainment process requiring attention. By and large, each report was intended to determine if the CAF had enough personnel to fulfill its mandated tasks.

The shortages identified in the 2002 *Military Recruiting and Retention* report are directly related to the FRP that occurred in the previous decade. Retention and recruiting initiatives in place were insufficient to address shortages and a unified strategy was not operative.<sup>18</sup> Reductions in recruiting and human resource development, combined with insufficient monitoring on the viability of occupations and limited training contributed to personnel problems in the early 2000s.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, a more robust human resource framework and bolstered recruiting efforts, including increased levels of staff, were necessary for proper personnel management.<sup>20</sup> This report set the stage for necessary changes to CAF recruiting and retention strategies, and slight gains were made. However, in the four years prior to the subsequent report, the number of needed personnel exceeded the actual number recruited.

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<sup>18</sup> Auditor General of Canada, *Military Recruiting and Retention*, Chapter 2 in Auditor General Status Report (April 2002), 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

The 2006 *Military Recruiting and Retention* report examined the progress from the previous report. It determined that while some progress had been made towards a better human resource structure and initiatives to balance the workforce, performance measurements for decision-makers and human resource management information were lacking.<sup>21</sup> Despite small gains, the CAF could not deliver on the mandated personnel strength goal of 62,300 as it fell short by approximately 2,400 trained members.<sup>22</sup> Shortages were noteworthy and drove continued focus on recruiting and retention in upcoming years.

Recognizing the shortfalls in achieving a steady state in personnel strength, the CAF issued a defence policy statement with a new government in 2005 with a renewed vision for the military that included prioritization of recruiting and retention.<sup>23</sup> The organization also acknowledged changing demographics and limited interest in the military by younger generations, which put additional pressure on an already stressed situation when combined with new security challenges and operational demands.<sup>24</sup> The number of trained personnel had declined since the previous report on *Recruitment and Retention*, but numbers eventually leveled off as new recruits entered the force. The CAF had the potential to achieve its personnel strength mandate, though inefficiencies remained in the recruiting system and lack of retention of already serving members inhibited the organization's ability to reach full strength.

A decade later, the Auditor General conducted another study on recruiting and retention in the CAF, reflecting and building upon the past two reports. The 2016 *Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting and Retention* report placed a similar focus on the critical aspects of recruiting,

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<sup>21</sup> Auditor General of Canada, *National Defence - Military Recruiting and Retention*, (2006)..., 55.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

training and retention of CAF members. Although the CAF made some headway on the systems and policies associated with these aspects of achieving occupational stability, a gap remained in the CAF's overall objective to achieve a balanced workforce due to displaced prioritization of recruiting goals. This gap still exists today.

The RCN has a personnel problem that continues to negatively affect the majority of its occupations. Although the CAF has prioritized recruiting and retention, the RCN has a growing shortage of personnel that has jeopardized the service's ability to conduct operations at sea. If the personnel problem is not sufficiently addressed, the RCN will be required to tie up or decommission ships in the not-too-distant future. Unfortunately, leadership has not taken a serious enough approach to personnel issues in the RCN, and shortages continue to grow.

Key stakeholders and overarching intake requirements are important for additional considerations in the personnel generation process because fulfilling intake requirements and the need for a comprehensive approach to collective recruiting and retention goals are significant contributors in solving the personnel problem. Present RCN occupations experience insufficient manning because of scanty prioritization of intake demands and under appreciation of occupation specific staffing shortages. Inadequate recruiting and retention challenges highlight various influences of life in the RCN and stability in RCN occupations shall only be effectively addressed by a consistent and tailored approach to recruiting and retention. A navy is more than just ships and machines. The RCN, to be a combat and operationally ready force, needs sufficient personnel with skills in the right occupations, most of which will be very technologically advanced. Otherwise, it is just ships without sailors.

## CHAPTER ONE

Personnel shortages across the RCN are significant and recruitment is vitally important to the recovery of occupations. Internet continues to be a significant source for the public to see firsthand life in the RCN, as do the classic television ads and recruiting exhibits displayed across many Canadian cities.<sup>25</sup> However, this is not enough. While these serve as great techniques to expose the navy to the general population, as does the significant influence of military friends and family, the RCN requires a systematic approach to recruiting to achieve enrollment goals. The current process remains unnecessarily ambiguous and convoluted, which serves to reduce efficiencies and ultimately hinder the organization's ability to effectively process applicants into service.

The number of positions, or establishment, reflects the minimum personnel needed to meet defence needs, as determined by military and civilian leadership. SSE makes it clear that despite critical personnel shortages, the military must deliver on its intended mandate to be “strong at home, secure in North America and engaged in the world.”<sup>26</sup> Of course, the desired number of personnel is highly variable and depends upon many factors. However, the CAF’s ability to reach those numbers has been problematic for several years, and raises concerns on what the impact will be on the delivery of military forces in the future.

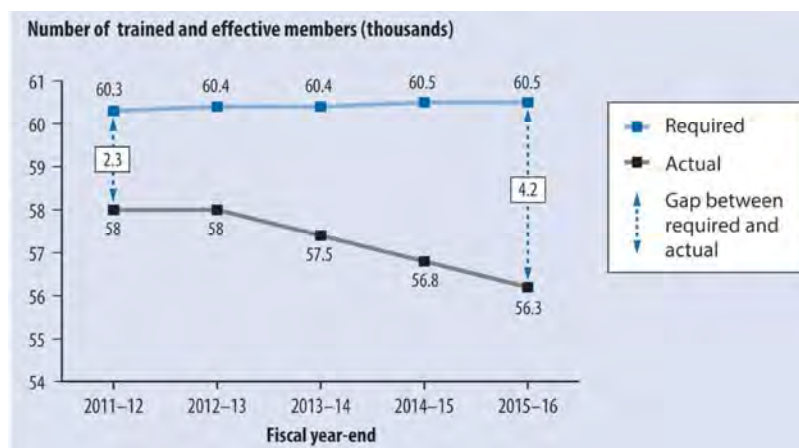
The need for a focused recruiting campaign can be seen in Figure 1.0. A 2016 snapshot of occupations reveals growth between the number of positions to the number of trained effective personnel. The goal of reaching 68,000 personnel was considered unlikely given the steady reduction in personnel since 2011 and there exists no apparent action plan to achieve that

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<sup>25</sup> Lisa Williams, Krystal Hachey, and Line St-Pierre, Defence Research and Development Canada Technical Memorandum DGMPRA TM 2010-026, *Navy Recruiting and Applicant Attraction*, (Defence Research and Development Canada, 2010), iii.

<sup>26</sup> Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged...*, 6 and 20.

objective.<sup>27</sup> Figure 1.0 reveals the increasing gap of trained effective members from 2,279 at the end of 2011 to 4,194 by 2016. This problem remains persistent for the RCN.



**Figure 1.0 Required Versus Actual Number of Trained Effective Members 2011-2016**

Source: Auditor General of Canada, “CAF Recruiting and Retention - National Defence,” 5.

Recruiting trends over several decades made achieving a balanced workforce difficult. This trend continues, as indicated in the Fall 2019 *Advisory of the Military Recruitment Process* which determined recruitment had only achieved 85% of its targets and was still not meeting diversity and priority occupation targets.<sup>28</sup> Current manning problems in the navy are the result of inadequate force generation practices that have not been sufficiently addressed over time. A tailored action plan on recruiting is critical to restoring occupational stability. However, obstacles in the system inhibit this effort.

<sup>27</sup> Auditor General of Canada, *Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting and Retention - National Defence*, Report 5 in Auditor General Status Report (November 2016), 4.

<sup>28</sup> Department of National Defence, *Advisory of the Military Recruitment Process*, (Ottawa: Assistant Deputy Minister (Review Services), 2019), 17.

## CHINKS IN THE CHAIN

Given the importance of personnel generation, many stakeholders are directly or indirectly involved in recruiting. Some key stakeholders are leading players in the organization. Each of these organizations is important to understanding where recruiting related issues reside and where improvements can be made.

As the functional authority on personnel-related business, Military Personnel Command (MILPERSCOM) is responsible for ensuring that the CAF is equipped with the requisite number of trained personnel to achieve tasks assigned by the Government of Canada. The command is responsible for all facets of the recruiting program as well as individual training and education, and retention within the CAF. MILPERCOM must deliver clear intent and direction to supporting organizations on recruiting, ensuring each is optimized to deliver on the collective goal of generating sufficient personnel to the fleet.

The Canadian Forces Recruiting Group (CFRG) falls under MILPERSCOM and is responsible to attract, process, select, and enrol Canadian citizens into the CAF. Each of the 26 full-time and 2 part-time recruitment centres is responsible for local outreach, tailored to a region's specific demographics.<sup>29</sup> The Assistant Deputy Minister Public Affairs (ADM(PA)) supports this mandate as they are responsible for advertising and public opinion research for the CAF. They are expected to increase military awareness to Canadians through national campaigns and a variety of other means of reaching the public. However, budget cuts have negatively impacted their efforts following a reduction of about 180 positions and closure of 13 recruiting centres.<sup>30</sup> Given the recruiting centre's role in attracting and recruiting Canadians, this cutback

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<sup>29</sup> Department of National Defence, *Advisory of the Military Recruitment Process...*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Auditor General of Canada, *Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting and Retention (2016)*..., 11.



effectively reduced the CAF footprint and made recruiting even more challenging. Reducing the recruiting footprint effectively reduces the number of applicants that can be processed, raising questions on the validity of recruiting as a CAF priority.

In addition to a smaller recruiting footprint, recruiters themselves are not always equipped with knowledge or support needed to provide potential recruits with the information they sought. This is particularly concerning for more difficult to recruit occupations, especially those that were ‘stressed’, which need sufficient knowledge to focus recruiting efforts.<sup>31</sup> Combining those factors with the length of time to process many applicant files and training backlogs at the L1 level, many potential members simply give up on the CAF and seek employment elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> The average time to process a file in 2015 was approximately 200 days, though some delays in the process can be attributed to insufficient information provided by applicants.<sup>33</sup> Insufficiently resourced recruiting centres that were critical in restoring force strength, were unintentionally adding to manning shortfalls.

The number of applications received by the recruiting centres are significantly larger than the number of enrollees. A 2019 study by the Assistant Deputy Minister (Review Services) (ADM(RS)) on the recruiting process determined that over 13,000, out of approximately 28,000 applicant files were closed and ultimately, not enrolled.<sup>34</sup> While it is expected that a number of applicants lose interest, the number of dropped files are alarmingly high. Such statistics further demonstrate continuing recruiting process inefficiencies and need for more analysis to improve the overall process. The RCN cannot afford to lose these potential sailors.

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<sup>31</sup> Occupations are considered “stressed” when staffing is at less than 90 percent of required number of trained and effective members.

<sup>32</sup> Auditor General of Canada, *Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting and Retention (2016)*..., 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Department of National Defence, *Advisory of the Military Recruitment Process*..., 13.

Within MILPERSCOM is the Director Personnel Generation Requirements (DPGR), which is given the authority to compile the intake requirements of the entire CAF. Level 1s (L1), including Director Naval Personnel (DNavP) (formerly Personnel and Training), submits intake requirements to DPGR for approval.<sup>35</sup> As the name suggests, this RCN directorate is also responsible for personnel related matters involving occupation management, policy development and renewal, organization and establishment, and attraction and recruiting governance. As this organization is responsible for overall CAF intake requirements, specific L1 needs are potentially misunderstood or misrepresented, resulting in personnel generation demands not being met.

Long before the recruiting group receives orders from MILPERSCOM on recruiting targets for any given fiscal year, several steps are taken. The first step is to determine the Strategic Intake Plan (SIP) via the Long Range Planning Model (LRPM). This model, which forecasts each occupation's intake requirements out to five or ten years, is the primary tool used in determining intake requirements by each L1. Included in the SIP are the priority and threshold occupations, which require additional attention in the recruiting process.<sup>36</sup> Many factors are incorporated into the tool, including entry plans, attrition, school capacities, and current strengths. It uses algorithms that combine historical, actual, and predictive data to create a realistic projection of the number of recruits needed each year to maintain, or regain, occupational stability. It is the primary tool used to determine intake requirements and therefore essential to the beginning of the recruiting process. However, it is imperfect and improvements to performance measures and greater fidelity in the data should be incorporated continuously.

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<sup>35</sup> A Level 1 Organization has direct accountability to the Deputy Minister or Chief of Defence Staff.

<sup>36</sup> Priority occupations are staffed at less than 90 percent of preferred staffing levels and Threshold occupations are staffed between 90 percent and 95 percent of preferred staffing levels.

Previous inaccuracies in the model have yielded erroneous data that can negatively influence recruiting targets.

The next step in the process involves the Annual Military Occupation Review (AMOR), during which each occupation provides representation to establish desired intake requirements to the Occupation Authority (OA). For the RCN, this authority is DNavP. The OAs are responsible to inform the Chief of Military Personnel (CMP) on the total force that will impact the occupations in a five to 30 year timeframe.<sup>37</sup> Once approved by the OA, the intake plan is sent to DPGR for further assessment before being officially approved by MILPERSCOM. The SIP is then disseminated to the recruiting group for execution in the new fiscal year. With careful management between DPGR and the L1s, the SIP can be adjusted throughout the year to accommodate unanticipated opportunities to rebalance specific intake plans. Previous in-year SIP management has been ad hoc, resulting in questionable balancing of intake requirements and misrepresentation of actual intake needs.

Each of the key organizations contributes to the collective effort to balance the workforce and ensure stability within CAF. The roles, authorities, and responsibilities of each have evolved over the years, but remain unclear and are not established as desired.<sup>38</sup> A comprehensive approach to the force generation process would increase efficiencies and reduce confusion on the roles and duties of each contributing organization. This includes a more clear and significant role of L1 organizations, who manage shortages daily and the subsequent impacts to operations. Also, the CAF has prioritized recruiting and must therefore equip recruiting centres with appropriate staff and resources to enable their efforts.

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<sup>37</sup> Department of National Defence, *CAF MIL PERS INSTR 01/08 - Annual Military Occupation Review*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2013), 2.

<sup>38</sup> Department of National Defence, *Advisory of the Military Recruitment Process...*, iv.

## INTAKE CONSIDERATIONS

How the RCN determines intake requirements explains some shortfalls in manning. Intake requirements are essential to occupational stability to sustain, regain, or even lower the recruiting needs of an occupation and if intake is not achieved. The effect can have lasting consequences. Intake demands are established to meet service requirements and must be fulfilled. Shortfalls are accounted for in subsequent intake requirements, which applies additional pressure on the entire force generating system. As these shortages mount, the impact to the fleet becomes increasingly problematic, necessitating undesirable movement of personnel among sea going units. The SIP, therefore, needs careful and constant management in order to ensure the CAF receives the right number of sailors required.

Influential factors existed well before CFRG received its recruiting mandate. The intake demand is first determined by the LRPM whereby the model is used to generate intake requirements based on user input and historical data. CMP refers to occupation modelling as the “conduct of research and analysis on the organizational structure of a military occupation to assess the impact of changes in demographics and military personnel policies on its workforce.”<sup>39</sup> The LRPM is now considered a dynamic document that can be manipulated in real-time; used and managed by various stakeholders across the CAF. Like most models, it is only as useful as the accuracy of the information inputted. Prior to 2019, the RCN used a non-real-time model managed at DNavP by the Occupation Manager (OM).

Management of the LRPM relied on OM's understanding of the model and the ability to input data according to its original design. While there were no clear instructions on populating the tool, oversight within the directorate mitigated erroneous user input. In addition to potential

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<sup>39</sup> Department of National Defence, *CAF MIL PERS INSTR 01/08 - Annual Military Occupation Review*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2013), 4.

misuse of the model, functionality of the model was questionable as errors in the algorithms were found after further analysis of the tool itself. While the intake requirements were ultimately approved by the OA and significant anomalies would have been resolved well in advance, it is possible that the intake demand was skewed by a defective model. The LRMP has since been recalibrated and remains foundational in determining and maintaining the intake plan. DPGR now uses the model for in-year SIP adjustments with approval from DNavP.

In addition to the possible user and system errors found in the legacy LRPM, manning data collected also contributed to potential inaccuracies. Significantly, available data may have been under-representative of true requirements, resulting in a model that produced lower than needed intake. Though no longer used, the Projected Status Report (PSR) was published biannually by DPGR and was a key document used to reset the personnel generation forecast.<sup>40</sup> Given the report's reset rate and potential shifts in manning levels over short periods of time, the data did not provide the level of accuracy required for determining specific intake requirements. The revised LRPM uses near real-time data from Guardian, the personnel management system, and is now the CAF standard for occupation modeling. This allows DPGR and the OAs to manage and keep continuous oversight on personnel-related statistics.

Reduction of the intake demand by the functional authority, MILPERSCOM, is a significant contributor to the mismanagement and sustained instability of occupations. After the annual AMOR is completed in late fall of each year, DPGR adds the RCN-approved SIP to the intake demand of all other L1s for an overall CAF SIP. Despite modeling of intake requirements and priority to increase recruiting, the combined SIP is historically too large and must be reduced. In the 2015/16 fiscal year, the combined L1 demand for personnel was 5,752 recruits.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

However, a reduction to 4,200 was issued by MILPERSCOM and delivered as the official target.<sup>41</sup> DPGR staff conducted an internal analysis to determine a more feasible intake number, which was based on: CFRG capacity to process applicants, the Canadian Forces Learning and Recruit School (CFLRS) capacity for Basic Military Qualifications (BMQ) and Basic Military Officer Qualifications (BMOQ), as well as the elemental training school's processing abilities. Funding for increased capacities for both organizations was considered too expensive and the CAF believed the problem would be "resolved" by the 2018/19 fiscal year.<sup>42</sup> Analytics suggested that this course of action would not close the gap in personnel strength, nor was there a plan in place to suggest recovery would be feasible in that timeframe. Ultimately, the SIP must meet the strategic interests of the CAF. However, reductions in personnel requirements come at a cost. L1 intake demands are not determined arbitrarily. They are calculated based on the needs of the service, and in the case of the RCN, they are critical to the recovery of occupations.

After careful consideration and analysis of the throughput limitations, DPGR adjusts the SIP and the overall number is sent to CMP for approval. The published intake numbers are used for performance measurement by DPGR and provided to CFRG for recruiting and internal selection for the new fiscal year.<sup>43</sup> Despite the growing number of stressed occupations and overall decline in TES, the RCN typically sees a noteworthy reduction in the approved SIP, which only serves to exacerbate issues relating to manning shortages.

Intake in any given occupation can be adjusted in-year pending approval from the OA. While increases in the SIP are beneficial to the affected occupation, it can also negatively affect other occupations by the perception that overall recruiting goals are being met. For example,

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<sup>41</sup> Auditor General of Canada, *Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting and Retention (2016)*..., 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Department of National Defence, *CAF MIL PERS INSTR 01/08 - Annual Military Occupation Review*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2013), 5.

Boatswain's (BOSN) are typically easier to recruit to than most other RCN occupations, and are often recruited to above the set SIP, but the overall ceiling on total intake does not change. The misleading result is that overall recruiting goals appear to be satisfied, while in reality, some occupations did not meet their necessary targets.

The RCN has faced reductions in intake demand for several years, which represents another obstacle in attempts to restore occupational stability. While the RCN has found innovative ways to increase training throughput, including a response to COVID-19 delays, the OA's intake signal is based on occupational requirements and result in continued TES decline if not met. At a minimum, intake must exceed attrition, of which the RCN has struggled to achieve. Continuation of this trend will force the RCN into a position where they are unable to sufficiently man the existing fleet, let alone the growing one. As such, the decision to curb enrollment is directly related to the RCNs ability to sail ships.

### **A WORK IN PROGRESS**

Reports on recruiting in the CAF have identified many challenges and obstructions in the process, which has led to improvements of varying degrees. Indeed, there is a continuation of inefficiencies that have yet to be addressed. The service remains unable to deliver on its intended objectives fully. The CAF's response to the various audits have been indicative of progress, and through the CAF action plan, the service seems poised to make necessary organizational and systemic changes. There are many initiatives and strategies looking to ensure the navy remains a credible, reliable service. To this end, the CAF must be prepared to continuously adapt and even radicalize recruiting efforts such that the RCN receives staffing levels required for a sustainable fleet.

A fulfilling career in the navy is an option for most Canadians, they just do not know it yet. A DRDC study on naval recruiting indicated that Canadians simply need to be more informed about the navy.<sup>44</sup> Given most of the population is far removed from the physical presence of naval forces, direct exposure to the navy is limited. The recent CDS directive on CAF public engagement aims to enhance military exposure by engaging Canadians directly with better appreciation of the roles, capabilities, and missions of the RCN and CAF writ large.<sup>45</sup> Market research has shown that the CAF is not seen as a notable employer by the targeted youth.<sup>46</sup> While outreach has always existed for the navy, the span of influence has been insufficient when compared against the potential talent hidden in the country's diverse population.

MILPERSCOM continues to progress towards a more effective and efficient recruiting plan. They have acknowledged that the current system is “not structured, governed [or] resourced to meet [the] strategic personnel generation objectives.”<sup>47</sup> In the aptly named OPERATION GENERATION, CMP is addressing changes required in recruiting and personnel generation processes in the CAF. This operation addresses three main problems in the recruiting system, including: “reactive recruiting approach...enrollment and component transfer process are not sufficiently enabled... and the initial training system relies on the interaction of multiple

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<sup>44</sup> Lisa Williams, Krystal Hachey, and Line St-Pierre, Defence Research and Development Canada Technical Memorandum DGMPRA TM 2010-026, *Navy Recruiting and Applicant Attraction*, (Defence Research and Development Canada, 2010), 41.

<sup>45</sup> Department of National Defence, CDS Directive - *CAF Public Engagement 2019*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 13 May 2019), 2.

<sup>46</sup> Kylie McMullan, Pinder Rehal, Katy Read, Judy Luo, Ashley Huating Wu, Leyland Pitt, Lisa Papania, and Colin Campbell, "Selling the Canadian Forces' Brand to Canada's Youth," *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 27, no. 4 (2009), 475, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/213138291?pq-origsite=summon>

<sup>47</sup> Department of National Defence, *Standing Operations Order - OPERATION GENERATION*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 20 March 2019), 4.



authorities belonging to environmental and functional L1s.”<sup>48</sup> The CAF has improved best practices compared to recent audits. However, polishing of modern recruiting action plans must occur often, while remaining adaptable to the future needs of the institution. The time for immediate and coordinated action is now.

The issue of long processing times has been insufficiently addressed and results in significant loss of potential recruits. This ongoing problem is among CMP’s strategic objectives through OPERATION GENERATION, which looks to substantially reduce enrollment times for new applicants.<sup>49</sup> The number of applicants interested in joining the forces is significantly higher than numbers enrolled. A reduction in processing times must occur for timely recovery of occupational stability. This long standing issue is a cornerstone to rebuilding occupations and must transform from strategy into action.

The RCN is similarly adapting to necessary change. The 2020 RCN Attraction 2020-2026 Implementation Directive provided direction for the RCN to conduct “direct public outreach and attraction activities, and execute a ‘One Navy’ attraction and recruiting plan to ensure the RCN attains the personnel [TES] authorized for the Regular and Reserve Force (ResF) NLT 2026.”<sup>50</sup> In doing so, the RCN, shall support CFRG in public outreach and attraction campaigns to assist in overall public awareness of the RCN.<sup>51</sup> Ultimately, recruitment of the next generation of sailors heavily depends on the navy’s strategic outreach program by creating awareness of the navy nationwide. However, strategic plans alone will not fill ships.

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Department of National Defence, *RCN Attraction 2020-2026 Implementation Directive*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 18 September 2020), 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

The navy is physically reaching the general public through internal waterways to support the navy's attraction and improve recruiting endeavours. In 2019, the frigate HMCS ST JOHN'S conducted KAIROS PASSANT, a strategic outreach operation that sees naval warships depart from Halifax and transit to the Great Lakes with many public engagements along the way.<sup>52</sup> This targeted recruiting approach is an effective mechanism to showcase RCN platforms in central Canada where the majority of the population resides, while providing the ship's crew, effectively over 200 recruiters, an opportunity to engage the communities visited during the operation. This particular campaign saw CFRG join the ship to target specific occupations and enrol future sailors on-scene. This is a relatively passive means of recruiting, and at most, is conducted once a year. It also takes a ship away from potential operations. The return on investment is questionable.

Previous education and experience is increasingly important in a highly competitive workforce. The navy capitalizes on attraction and recruiting efforts to that end. The RCN seeks to accredit previous education and experience in effort to reduce individual training and time to promotion.<sup>53</sup> This approach not only improves the timely force generation of trained sailors, it provides the member with gratification and vindication of previous efforts.

Though not a new recruiting program, the Non-Commissioned Member Subsidized Training and Education Plan (NCMSTEP) provides NCMs opportunity for full-time subsidized training or education at a Canadian education or training institutions for approved courses

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<sup>52</sup> Department of National Defence, *Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces 2020-21 Departmental Plan*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2020), 4.

<sup>53</sup> Government of Canada, "RCN Focused on Quality of Life for Sailors," last accessed 25 February 2021, <http://www.navy-marine.forces.gc.ca/en/news-operations/news-view.page?doc=rcn-focused-on-quality-of-life-for-sailors/jjy916n>.

relating to their specific occupation.<sup>54</sup> This is a notable benefit to the member, while also providing the RCN with additional means to produce trained, employable personnel. Every year the NCMSTEP is reviewed for compatibility between military occupations and education curriculums. In the last few years, it has expanded from 14 to 95 college programs across Canada.<sup>55</sup> These programs offer full college subsidization, or for those applicants who have completed the program on their own, can join the RCN as semi-skilled. A semi-skilled applicant must have completed a minimum of 70% of required training and become eligible for early advancement and employment in occupation following delta training.<sup>56</sup> In addition to these enrollment benefits, though not part of NCMSTEP, some stressed occupations offer signing bonuses to eligible recruits.<sup>57</sup> These programs offer additional incentives to join the RCN, while providing opportunity for advanced progression in short staffed occupations. A shift from legacy to a new generation of warships demands a highly trained and technical workforce. These programs are not only essential elements of restoring stability, they also provide the fleet with the skills necessary to operate a fleet that is currently short of specialized skills. These programs offer a better incentive to join the forces, but given competition in the civil market, must not be overly relied upon to significantly impact personnel shortages.

The CAF must also consider more extreme measures to balance the workforce. The Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) has leveraged secondments from the Royal Australian Navy

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<sup>54</sup> Department of National Defence, *Naval Personnel Instruction #11 - Royal Canadian Navy Occupation Management*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, October 2016), 4.

<sup>55</sup> Department of National Defence, DAOD 5002-7, *Non-Commissioned Member Subsidized Education Plan - Regular Force* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2004).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Government of Canada, "Life in the Forces: Pay and Benefits," last accessed 23 February 2021, <https://forces.ca/en/life-in-the-military/>.

and recruited from the UK during severe personnel shortages.<sup>58</sup> While this may be a radical approach to recruiting, all options are needed to manage personnel shortages. Several techniques recruit individuals into the navy with varying degrees of success, but the time has come to consider extraordinary measures as well.

Overall, CMP has acknowledged issues raised by the previous Auditor General of Canada reports and seeks to improve the personnel generation system such that overall needs of the RCN and CAF are positioned to achieve recruiting targets required for the future establishment successfully. Put simply, the RCN must capitalize on all recruiting efforts and ensure intake demands and throughput requirements are satisfied consistently. Failure to do so will undermine the military's credibility and threaten the navy's ability to deliver operational effect. The reality of recruiting during a lockdown pandemic is that traditional recruiting options are limited, but the need for new members remains paramount to maintaining the force.

### **IMPACT OF A PANDEMIC**

The COVID-19 global pandemic had a profound effect on the way in which business is conducted in the CAF and RCN, including how personnel are recruited. The pandemic struck at a time when recruiting was mounting and many students were finishing school and looking for employment. Given the ambiguity and impact of the virus, combined with growing concern for job security, the military held a promising future for many seeking secure employment. The fact that interest in the military has increased due to the pandemic is not a new phenomenon. Historically, interest in the forces peaks during periods of economic despair and uncertainty.

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<sup>58</sup> Paget, Steven. "The Best Small Nation Navy in the World"? The Twenty-First Century Royal New Zealand Navy." *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs* 8, no. 3 (2016): 246, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1858080540?pq-origsite=summon>

In December 2019, before the pandemic ravaged Canada, RCN intake was at 480, or 46% of the total SIP. Contrasted to intake in the same month a year later, the RCN added 253 new members, or 28% of the SIP. Since the beginning of the 2020/2021 recruiting year, the number of new recruits attending BMQ/BMOQ was about one-quarter of the original number anticipated.<sup>59</sup> Despite higher numbers of applicants, safety protocols limited processing of files and therefore the intake achieved. This unprecedented event has had significant ramifications on personnel shortages problematic before the pandemic struck.

In accordance with the CDS directive on OPERATION LASER, the CAF's response to the global pandemic, preservation of operational effectiveness has necessitated limitations to postings, enrollments, and subsequent training.<sup>60</sup> While this setback will have at least a temporal effect on the number of sailors entering the fleet in coming years, the navy looks to mitigate these challenges where possible, including decentralized training within formations, and finding creative ways of community interaction to maintain public interest.

The pandemic posed a significant threat to Canadians and persisted well into 2021. Accordingly, the number of expected new recruits will remain low, at least lower than the established targets, which will continue to mount in the years following the pandemic. While too soon to predict the impact on future operations, the RCN should prepare for even greater vulnerability in total force strength as recovery becomes increasingly elusive.

Recruiting into the CAF has been a persistent challenge as inefficiencies in the process and lines of effort between organizations requires further refinement to reach desired

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<sup>59</sup> The Globe and Mail, "Canadian Military Short Thousands of Troops as COVID-19 Hampers Training Efforts," last accessed 3 March 2021, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canadian-military-short-thousands-of-troops-as-covid-19-hampers/>

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

effectiveness. Additionally, management and application of intake requirements has inhibited recruiting efforts and stands as a significant impediment to meeting L1 demands. While there is progress in recruiting, focus here must endure and adapt to reach the talent hidden among Canadians. Insufficient recruiting in the past has created a significant capability gap in the RCN, which continues to worsen as the pandemic continues to take hold on the available population.

## CHAPTER TWO

Maintaining and sustaining a military force is always a challenging exercise subject to many factors. Past personnel generation inefficiencies in the RCN insufficiently addressed intake demands needed to rebalance the force. The organization's personnel strength requirements faced a downward trend in staffing levels, compounded by increases in the establishment. Selected occupations and accompanying personnel strengths indicates the personnel generation system is inadequate to address personnel shortages. Current fleet issues and future fleet considerations impact changes to total force requirements. Balancing manning requirements are a factor because vulnerabilities are associated with enduring shortages in personnel. Specific RCN occupations reveal the present state of personnel deficiencies and challenges associated with restoring occupational stability in the navy.

### THE RCN LANDSCAPE

The fleet is undergoing a large fleet recapitalization. Introduction of new classes of ships, such as the Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels (AOPV), the Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC), and the Joint Support Ship (JSS) also includes a requirement to staff them. While a plan exists to reduce numbers of ships in the current fleet over the timeframe, these new ships will increase demand for additional personnel to fill and support future fleet operations. The recruit of today will sail this future fleet, and the navy is presently unable to force generate to the demand. If the navy has any hope of manning the future fleet, it must restore occupational stability among its ranks. The RCN is at risk of procuring state-of-the-art warships, only to see them tied up alongside.

Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) developed a tool to quantify and evaluate the crew size and composition of the future fleet, which was also used to assess the

feasibility of reducing personnel in the present fleet. This model, known as the Simulation for Crew Optimization and Risk Evaluation (SCORE), provides decision-makers with a data-driven analysis of the minimum crew required to perform high-tempo operational duties.<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, the initial Halifax Class crew complement was planned for a total of 200 sailors. However, in 2013 the SCORE revealed that a ship would require 217 personnel onboard to perform at a high readiness level.<sup>62</sup> For the 12 frigates in the current fleet, a theoretical increase of 204 personnel was required from the establishment. The Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS) approved the increase the following year.<sup>63</sup> The same evaluation was conducted for the AOPVs, which resulted in an approved ship complement of 65. This model, which requires testing against real world demands, is influential in shaping the early demand signal for sufficient manning of the entire fleet.

It is worth noting that a ship's complement varies depending on the mission assigned, which can include a maritime helicopter detachment, trial staff, or Other Government Departments (OGDs). While these additions increase the overall count to the ship's crew size, the core crew remains around 217. Also, in order to increase the Force Generation (FG) of sailors awaiting experience at sea, it is expected that ships at sea fill all available bunks, which may include sailors from alongside ships or non-seagoing units. All opportunities to FG are seized in order to maximize the critical sailing experience that is required of all sailors, which is becoming an issue given current reductions in platforms. By and large, at-sea experience levels are well below what they used to be in the past, a factor in retention. Flexibility in the number of core

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<sup>61</sup> Dr. Renne Chow, Dr., Matthew Lamb, Ghislain Charest, and Daniel Labbé, "Evaluation of Current and Future Crew Sizes and Compositions: Two RCN Case Studies," *Naval Engineers Journal* Vol. 128 (December 2016): 55.

<sup>62</sup> Dr. Renne Chow, Dr., Matthew Lamb, Ghislain Charest, and Daniel Labbé, "Evaluation...", 55.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



versus additional personnel must be considered and the navy poised to adapt should the situation demand.

While modeling serves a purpose, it is an imperfect instrument that predicts a likely outcome. The reality lies in the physical testing of a ship at sea in an operational context. Like any new design, there is a trial-and-error period. A balancing act is necessary to determine the right mixture for success at sea. For the Halifax class, the original measure was cut short of the preferred complement. The AOPVs shall begin with a crew of 65. Whether more, or perhaps less is determined over time. Any increase in establishment should be reflected in early recruiting of individuals, and indeed it is. The current short-term plan of attach postings to manage offsets is a risky solution to the larger manning problem and carries potential unintended negative effects, including retention considerations. However, the navy must adapt numbers should actual manning change, especially if numbers increase. It must also ensure future crewing needs are met well in advance of platform delivery and be cautious in expectations for smaller ship complements that could prematurely reduce the force structure, whereby the ships are challenged to meet crewing requirements.<sup>64</sup> The RCN must prepare accordingly. The legacy fleet is already being stretched in its ability to manage personnel, a problem that will transfer to the future fleet if not taken seriously now. It is, therefore, in the best interest of the navy to err on the side of caution when setting intake demands for the future fleet, and at the same time ensuring those personnel demands are actually met.

An RCN initiative, known as the Force Mix Structure Design (FMSSD), was intended to reconcile the establishment and eliminate or add positions essential for sustained operations

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<sup>64</sup> Ian D.H Wood, "Crewing Strategies for the Royal Canadian Navy's Future Ships," *Canadian Naval Review* 10, no. 4 (2014): 5.

within the organization. Mapping out future roles for the RCN determined if the organization was able to support the operational needs identified in SSE. After reviewing Force Employment (FE) manning requirements, and later FG requirements in support of FE, it was apparent that the establishment needed to grow substantially to meet the potential requirements of the future navy.<sup>65</sup> Present operational demands on the RCN have not stressed the establishment to the extent of this study, and careful management of ship readiness cycles has mitigated manning shortfalls. However, the navy requires a robust plan to ensure the establishment meets future manning needs.<sup>66</sup> This review is not yet complete, nor is it clear if any decisions have been made based on findings thus far.

The RCN is also conducting an omnibus occupation analysis whereby naval managed occupations will be reviewed and potentially restructured to meet the force's future needs.<sup>67</sup> The Weapons Engineering Technician (W ENG TECH) was the first of the recent analysis, which was implemented in 2011 and saw consolidation of five legacy occupations. The Marine Technician (MAR TECH) occupation was created in May 2017, which saw three legacy occupations combined into one. Pressure to implement the new MAR TECH occupation before a plan had matured resulted in training and qualifications challenges, which are still being mitigated today. The BOSNs also completed an occupation review. However, the study was less intensive than other full cycle occupation analysis where changes, including manning levels, were relatively minimal. Similarly, the Clearance Diver (CL DVR) occupation completed their analysis in 2019 and changes are currently being implemented, including an increase in

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<sup>65</sup> Jackie Geiger, email with author, 14 January 2021.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Department of National Defence, *Royal Canadian Navy Strategic Plan 2017-2022*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 15.

establishment by 31.<sup>68</sup> The three combat occupations, Naval Combat Information Operator (NCI OP), Naval Electronic Sensor Operator (NES OP), and the Sonar Operator (SONAR OP), plus the Naval Communicator (NAV COMM) commenced an analysis in 2017 and continues today. The Steward (STWD) occupation is conducting an occupation analysis where changes to the current occupation are expected to be relatively significant. Finally, all three officer occupations, Naval Warfare Officer (NWO), Naval Combat Systems Engineering Officer (NCS ENG) and Marine System Engineer (MS ENG) are currently in their second year of analysis. The occupation analyses are conducted by DPGR and typically take approximately 18 to 24 months to complete. However, original timelines have been delayed for various factors, including slowdowns caused by COVID-19. While these occupational analyses aim to modernize and enhance elements of naval occupations, they also contribute to restructuring of personnel requirements, which likely includes reconciliation of required manning levels across all ranks. The modernization of RCN occupations also presents an opportunity to rebrand legacy occupations and make them more appealing and relatable to the public. The talent needed in the future warship is increasingly relatable to people seeking, modern, innovative, and technologically advanced skills. The navy needs those people.

Clearly, the RCN has embarked on an ambitious, yet necessary plan to align occupations with a 21st century, modern workforce in mind. As implementation of various occupation analyses loom in the coming years, so too does the potential requirement for a change to the establishment. For example, the CL DVR study's completion saw increase in trained establishment by 26.5%, a substantial increase in personnel that had not been accounted for in any force generation planning process. Unanticipated increases in the establishment, especially

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<sup>68</sup> Department of National Defence, *RCN Quarterly Report FY 2020/2021 Q2*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2020), 17.

increases at the more senior ranks, have lasting impacts on the occupation's ability to produce the required skills and experience needed to fill those new positions. Those ultimately influence the occupation's overall stability. Early indicators from DPGR suggest an increase in positions will be required in other occupations currently being studied. However, no decisions have been made to effect establishment changes or recruiting targets.

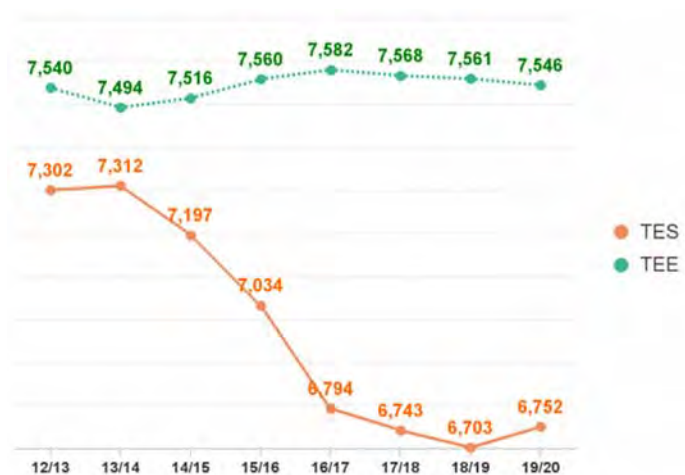
## **OCCUPATIONAL STRENGTH**

Given current and future fleet manning requirements, some RCN occupations complicate the present manning issue faced by the navy and past recruiting has had a lasting effect on those occupations. Messaging on the current state of occupations needs to be clear and supported by analytical data before appropriate action is taken.

To start, occupational stability is determined by a ratio of people to positions, also referred to as the Trained Effective Strength (TES) versus the Trained Effective Establishment (TEE). Though this number is referred to when discussing the stability of an occupation, it is only a surface level analysis that does not reveal underlying fundamentals in detailed analysis of each occupation. Decision makers must be equipped with accurate and relevant information in order to address critical shortages, specifically in the sea-going ranks.

In January 2021, RCN TES was 6,581, while the TEE was 7,527. Thus, occupational stability was at 87.4%, which equates to a deficiency of 946 sailors. Figure 2.0 below illustrates the sizable gap between number of trained personnel versus RCN managed positions, which continues to grow. According to CMP measures, this percentage reveals that manning in the RCN falls into a stressed category overall. Upon further analysis, only six RCN occupations fall below the 90% threshold to be considered stressed, but their stability is so low that it brings the

RCN's overall stability down. However, RCN health is sufficiently low to raise vulnerability concerns and questions on capability to fulfill CAF mandates.



**Figure 2.0 RCN TES vs TEE**

Source: RCN Managed Workforce Health, Director Naval Personnel

The imbalance of personnel is also directly related to inadequate recruiting of stressed occupations. Though reported recruiting goals were met in previous years, it was only achieved due to over recruiting in some occupations.<sup>69</sup> In other words, the intake plans of some occupations were adjusted in the year to go beyond the approved intake, while other occupations did not receive the intake required to regain occupational stability. The net sum is misleading unless the intake is broken down by occupation; a danger of targets and numbers, which become meaningless out of context. In 2016, there were twenty-one stressed occupations, many of which had been so for several years.<sup>70</sup> This can be attributed to a variety of factors, including not

<sup>69</sup> Auditor General of Canada, *Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting and Retention (2016)*..., 9.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

achieving intake requirements, high attrition, or lag in the training system which prevented members from becoming trained in their occupation.

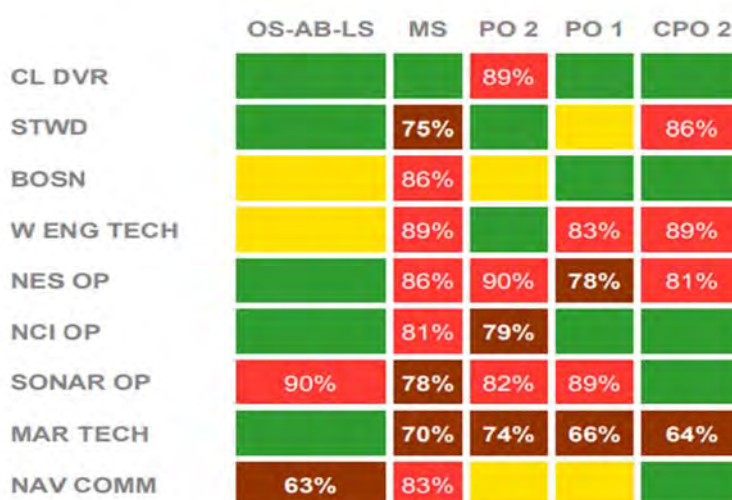
Three historically easy occupations to recruit to and maintain occupational stability consistently are STWDs, BOSNs and CL DVRs. CL DVRs, unlike all other RCN occupations, are recruited internally as they require applicants to be trained in a previous occupation before they become eligible for diver selection. The STWD and CL DVR occupations are the only two occupations above 95% health, while the remaining five are between 90 and 94% where recovery of their stability is obtainable in the short-term. BOSNs are historically above 95%. However, recent increases in the establishment at the junior ranks have displaced the occupation from being considered stable. While the RCN's overall occupational stability is an indicator of the balance of personnel to positions and highlights the need for an overall improvement in recruiting and retention strategies, it does not reveal the reality of personnel shortages that lies within deeper analysis of each occupation, including specific ranks.

Analysis by occupation and rank reveals a more striking reality, which has not been fully acknowledged in past recruiting efforts. The overall occupational stability for STWDs reveals they are healthy at 97.9%. However, when broken down by rank, a significant shortage at the Master Sailor rank discloses health is at 75%.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, NCS ENG has occupational health above the stressed threshold. However, a shortage of 26 Lieutenant-Commanders (LCdr) engineers puts occupational health for that rank at 74%. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below are the occupational health by rank for each RCN-managed occupation. Colours represent occupational health status: green is 95% or greater, yellow is between 90 and 95%, red is 80 to 90% and below 80% is brown. These numbers illustrate the requirement for focused recruiting strategies

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<sup>71</sup> Department of National Defence, *RCN Managed Workforce Health - Current TES vs Positions*, Ottawa: DND Canada, January 2021.

and targeted attraction, not simply an intake goal for the RCN writ large. Shortages in specific ranks create significant vulnerabilities, in particular, middle management positions that will soon be critical to a successful transition of legacy platforms to new ones. It should be noted that the NES OP, NCI OP and MAR TECH occupations are 'green' at the Sailor 3rd class, formerly Ordinary Seaman (OS) rank as a result of a surge in FY 19/20 and is not indicative of past trends.<sup>72</sup> The impact of the pandemic will likely see a reversal in these gains over time.



**Figure 2.1 Non-Commissioned Rank and Occupation TES vs TEE**

Source: RCN Managed Workforce Health, Director Naval Personnel



<sup>72</sup> Department of National Defence, *Regular Force Strategic Intake Plan Fiscal Year 2019/2020*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 31 March 2020).

## Figure 2.2 Commissioned Rank and Occupation TES vs TEE

Source: RCN Managed Workforce Health, Director Naval Personnel

The RCN aims to achieve Employment Equity (EE) goals in support of the Treasury Board Secretariat. This will be accomplished when the RCN sees 25.1% women, 11.8% visible minority and 3.5% Indigenous peoples by 2026.<sup>73</sup> This is in direct support of OPERATION GENERATION and SSE goals, and to this end, the navy is leading the CAF. As of February 2021, the RCN registered a total navy (including the ResF): 20.6% women, 11.1% visible minority and 3.0% Indigenous peoples.<sup>74</sup> Given trends in insufficient recruiting across many occupations, the challenge to meet this target is not insignificant. Additionally, female participation in the RCN reveals a shortcoming in distribution among occupations. The STWD occupation accounts for 38% of all women in the RCN and seven occupations have 10% or less.<sup>75</sup> As of 2019, the CAF did not have a special recruiting program targeting women. Present EE numbers lead the CAF in the 2026 target. However, equal distribution of women among naval occupations is unlikely. Attracting citizens to the RCN is also influenced by the level of diversity found in occupations, which constitutes a growing percentage of available talent.

While surface analysis of data exposes some personnel manning concerns, specific occupations and their respective ranks reveal a much more troubling reality that must not go overlooked. As occupational stability concerns grow and vulnerability to perform naval duties increase, the importance of continued, insufficient recruiting must be fully understood by

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<sup>73</sup> Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 12. and Department of National Defence, *RCN Attraction 2020-2026 Implementation Directive*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 18 September 2020), 2.

<sup>74</sup> Department of National Defence, *CAF Employment Equity Statistics*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, February 2021).

<sup>75</sup> Department of National Defence, *RCN Managed Workforce Health - Women Representation*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, February 2021).



leadership. Continued inaction due to misleading information, and under-appreciation on the impact of personnel shortages faced by most RCN occupations serves to accelerate manning deficiencies and increase service vulnerabilities. This ultimately raises questions on the service's ability to perform mandated tasks.

## **ESTABLISHMENT CHANGES**

While some occupations have recently reduced TEE, most RCN occupations are seeing a substantial increase in establishment. In 2017, SSE indicated an increase in the total CAF RegF size by 3,500 personnel, of which a partial allocation contributes to an increase of around 600 personnel to the navy in the next several years.<sup>76</sup> This includes an increase by 439 in support of the new Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC) platforms and supporting shore establishment.<sup>77</sup> The intended increase has been accounted for in the annual Defence Team Establishment Plan (DTEP) for 2022 growth as well as the LRPM.<sup>78</sup> Given the current personnel gap of 946 and insufficient recruiting over the last several years, the RCN is at risk of not producing the number of TES required to meet its future establishment.

The impact on increasing the establishment of stressed occupations serves to compound occupational stability issues, but it can also negatively affect a stable occupation, too. The NWO occupation saw a drastic decline in TES versus TEE over a five-year period in which occupational health went from over 100% to approximately 82%.<sup>79</sup> In time, trained strength dropped by 68 members while the number of positions increased by 138.<sup>80</sup> While the annual DTEP typically sees a modest increase in the establishment that necessitates manageable intake

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<sup>76</sup> Department of National Defence, *Record of Discussion: RCN Annual Military Occupation Review 2020 - Annex A*, (National Defence Headquarters: file 3371-5555-1), January 2021, 1.

<sup>77</sup> Aislinn Joiner, email with author, 26 January 2021.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Jason Aitken, "NWO: 2020/2021 AMOR," Ottawa, ON, 17 November 2020, with permission.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

demands, large and relatively unforecast changes to the number of positions in a small organization like the navy can be significant.

Increases in the establishment can be relatively unexpected. In addition to SSE growth, 52 sea-going positions were repurposed to the Maritime Coastal Defence Vessel (MCDV) fleet after the decision to crew the ships with RegF personnel primarily.<sup>81</sup> These ships are captained by Lieutenant-Commanders (LCdr), which was short by approximately 30 personnel at the time of this change. In all, 350 RegF positions are in MCDVs, which have been repurposed from elsewhere in the organization.<sup>82</sup> This change in the establishment made a significant and enduring impact on the occupational stability of NWOs.

Figure 2.3 reveals a steady increase in NWO positions over the next several years, which given the steady decline in TES since 2015, showcases a growing gap in overall strength. In January 2021, NWO occupational health was at a notable low of 81.9%.<sup>83</sup> As illustrated in the graph, a bold increase in TES is required in order to recover occupation stability within the decade, noting too, that this increase is only at the junior levels via recruitment and it will be several years before stability is restored at the senior ranks. While most occupations achieve trained status within a year or two of their enrollment, others, such as the officer occupations, can take up to seven years before they are trained. These long training times create significant personnel management issues, particularly when they are trying to recover occupational stability. Even if recruiting goals are met, the occupation may be several years from recovery. Ultimately,

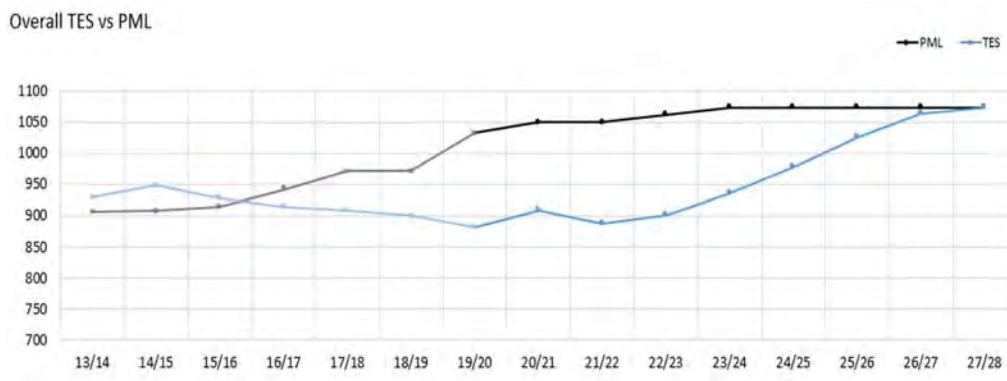
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<sup>81</sup> Department of National Defence, *NAVGEN 041/16, Component Transfer Opportunity for NAVRES to RegF RCN* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2016), 2.

<sup>82</sup> Steeve Dionne, email with author, 26 January 2021.

<sup>83</sup> Department of National Defence, *RCN Managed Workforce Health - Current TES vs Positions*, Ottawa: DND Canada, January 2021.

any growth in establishment that is not met or exceeded by intake induces greater vulnerability to fleet operations.



**Figure 2.3 NWO Trained Strength versus Positions**

Source: NWO AMOR 2020, Director Naval Personnel

NWO occupational stability is emblematic of personnel gaps faced by most RCN occupations. While growth is important to the organization, it does not come without consequence. The seemingly easy solution is to recruit to the intake numbers proposed by the OA, which given trends in growing shortages, requires significant intake demands and subsequent recruiting efforts. Noting that previous intake requirements have historically been reduced by DPGR given the overall CAF intake demand and personnel processing limitations. Even if the demand was satisfied, the time to fill personnel gaps across all ranks, especially given current vacancies at the middle management positions, is high and requires creative personnel management.

The decision to increase CAF strength has a long-lasting impact on the stability of occupations as the change takes several years before enough personnel are generated to fill those positions, especially those created for more senior ranks. It takes years to create a trained, skilled

and experienced member to satisfy any new position requirements. The first step however, is getting the right person at the right time to join the force.

## **CREATIVE OFFSET**

In support of modernization of the naval reserve structure and reality that the FG model of the ResF was unsustainable, the MCDV establishment became primarily crewed by RegF members.<sup>84</sup> This decision was supplemented by the “Big Idea” initiative in which the Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy (CRCN) directed that every serving Class C Reservist, or any Class C who had served in the previous five years of the announcement, was eligible for a component transfer into the RegF.<sup>85</sup> This meant that all LCdrs and Petty Officers First Class (PO1) and below who met the criteria were invited to join the RegF at rank. The offers were distributed to 355 eligible members, with the hope that most would accept the terms and join the RegF, offsetting the growing delta in trained members.<sup>86</sup> This ‘idea’ presented a unique approach to restoring RegF occupational stability. However, it further compounded ResF manning issues and was implemented with additional challenges.

This initiative was well intended, but it also represented dissatisfaction for those already serving in the RegF. Many felt that the ‘at rank’ transfers were not only undertrained, but that these members outranked others in their occupation that were more trained and experienced, but were underranked. Indeed, most transfers required delta training in their occupation in order to be fully employable in the new component.

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<sup>84</sup>Department of National Defence, *NAVGEN 041/16, Component Transfer Opportunity for NAVRES to RegF RCN* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2016), 2.

<sup>85</sup>Department of National Defence, *Record of Discussion: Annual Military Occupation Review November 2016 - RCN Managed Occupations*, (National Defence Headquarters: file 3371-1180-1), February 2017, 3.

<sup>86</sup>Steeve Dionne, email with author, 3 February 2021.

Though not every occupation in the RegF exists in the ResF, this resourceful idea helped offset the trained delta that existed in several occupations. It was a relatively instant means of increasing the TES without significant training time, especially at the higher ranks. By the completion of the Big Idea in 2017, a total of 154 ResF accepted the offer to component transfer, or 43% of offers.<sup>87</sup> These transfers offset some deltas in occupational strength. However, they were not balanced across all occupations. One quarter of transfers went to the BOSNs, who were a stable occupation at the time.<sup>88</sup> This one-time initiative made a modest change to the strength of select RCN occupations and earned praise by those who transferred, but critical gaps in overall strength remained.

## THROUGHPUT

In order to recover stability in relatively short order, most occupations are modelled with a recovery inside of five to ten years and as such, the RCN requires a bold approach on the intake plan. Assuming these demands are met and new applicants processed, the training system marks the next limitations on the number of personnel each occupation can process in any given year. For instance, the MARTECH occupation is presently unable to recover its occupational stability due to training constraints unless a substantial change in training throughput is made. In the last six years, MARTECHs averaged 152 releases per year, while there is only enough training capacity for 144 members per year.<sup>89</sup> An AMOR proposal to increase the training throughput to 166 per year still does not yield enough personnel entering service to regain occupational stability within the decade.<sup>90</sup> The focus on achieving the minimum intake is clear. However, the

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<sup>87</sup> Steeve Dionne, email with author, 3 February 2021.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> James Smith, "MARTECH: 2020/2021 AMOR," Ottawa, ON, 17 November 2020, with permission.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

training system must enable required throughput to not only regain the stability of many RCN occupations, but to simply maintain them.

The 2019/2020 recruiting year saw a jump in RCN recruiting over previous years, which is largely due to focused recruiting efforts. Figure 2.0 above illustrates a modest increase in TES. However, the rate at which the RCN requires new sailors remains high and pressure to achieve those targets must not wane. While a noteworthy change to past recruiting trends for the navy, the overall intake achieved remained the lowest of the L1s.<sup>91</sup> This data represents a slight, yet insufficient increase in trained strength in one year and does not constitute a new trend. It is a single measure that may falsely imply the navy is on a path to recovering occupation stability. Of the 937 requested, the total number recruited was 656, or 70% of the approved SIP.<sup>92</sup> While progress in establishing occupational stability relative to recent years is possible, the recruiting targets remain insufficient to expeditiously produce numbers of future sailors needed to rebalance the force. The 2020/2021 recruiting year saw a significant increase in the annual enrolment of applicants over previous years. This increase is likely due to high unemployment and uncertainty brought on by the pandemic. However, mitigating requirements to offset the spread of COVID-19 have significantly delayed throughput. Occupational instabilities will progressively worsen due to the pandemic, regardless of plans to alleviate throughput. The RCN will need to consider fleet management options well beyond distribution of limited personnel.

Inefficiencies and insufficient force generation practices of the past, combined with recent global setbacks, challenge the navy's ability to rebalance its workforce. The limited number of personnel spanning most RCN occupations becomes concerning should the

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<sup>91</sup>Department of National Defence, *Regular Force Strategic Intake Plan Fiscal Year 2019/2020*, Ottawa: DND Canada, 31 March 2020.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

government require the navy to deliver a higher operational presence in the future. Numbers of personnel available compared against the growing organization stretches the capacity for the navy to deliver on its mandates. Despite growing numbers of applicants in the last two years, the pandemic has practically curbed personnel production, thereby compounding manning issues. Recruiting is critical to the balancing of occupational stability. However, the navy must ensure it is doing everything possible to ensure losses are mitigated from inside the force. Given persistent shortages in manning and challenges of recruiting, retaining members is now more critical than ever. The navy is in midst of creating a revitalized fleet and must ensure talented, experienced sailors are in sufficient numbers to enable successful, future operations at sea.

## CHAPTER THREE

To satisfy the continuing needs of the service, significant focus is placed on the front end of personnel generation. Specifically, sufficient recruitment of the right candidates into appropriate occupations. This is no easy feat and inability to achieve intake demands have lasting and negative consequences to the vulnerability of the organization. To meet the demands of future operations at sea, the CAF cannot rely solely on its plan to bolster recruiting numbers. This has been an enduring problem. An equally challenging personnel issue is ensuring talent remains in the RCN. Modernization of the navy, among many other facets of a growing force, will require significant corporate knowledge that exists in the current naval staff. The navy must, therefore, ensure losses are minimized from within the service. Given past recruiting trends and reduction in personnel generation caused by a pandemic, retention is more critical than ever.

Occupational stability relies on simple math. In order to sustain the health of an occupation, intake must exceed attrition. Most RCN occupations are not in the category of sustainment, but rather restoration. Therefore, it is even more critical that the RCN reduce attrition as much as practicable and retain the talent the organization has created.

### **RCN ATTRITION**

Attrition comes in many forms within the RCN. Some benefit other CAF occupations, while many do not. Those releasing from the RCN to join other occupations, or occupation transfers, are a zero-sum game for the CAF, but a potential loss to the RCN. These come in the form of Voluntary Occupation Transfers (VOT) or Compulsory Occupation Transfers (COT), depending if the transfer is personally directed or directed through CAF administration. Similarly, attrition through programs such as University Training Plan for Non-Commissioned Members (UTPNM) and Special Commissioning Plan (SCP) occurs, whereby a Non-



Commissioned Member (NCM) receives a commission and enters into an officer occupation.<sup>93,94</sup> While some such transfers result in the member remaining in the navy, it is still a loss to the former occupation and affects overall stability. Personnel management is a living entity, continually in flux and adjustment. It is never settled, with numerous permutations. It should also be noted that attrition through occupation transfers is accounted for in modeling future requirements, in a predictive manner.

Regardless of conditions of release, the RCN should aspire to reduce attrition as much as possible, particularly those released out of the CAF before retirement age. Unhealthy attrition is particularly damaging to the institution because the member has personally chosen to leave. Consequently, an unintended vacancy is created behind them after they have left the organization. This is particularly impactful at the more senior ranks as skills developed and experiences gained at that level are not simply replaced with a new recruit. While intake modeling such as the LRPM considers the flowthrough requirements of the occupation, which includes releases, it is an imperfect process that is largely based on historical data. Higher releases than historical averages will therefore affect production forecasts and future intake requirements.

The number of personnel retiring at the end of their Terms of Service (TOS) has slowed over recent years given the end of the Initial Engagement (IE) 20 TOS, which saw members eligible for retirement after 20 years of service (YOS).<sup>95</sup> IE 20 was replaced by IE 25 in the early

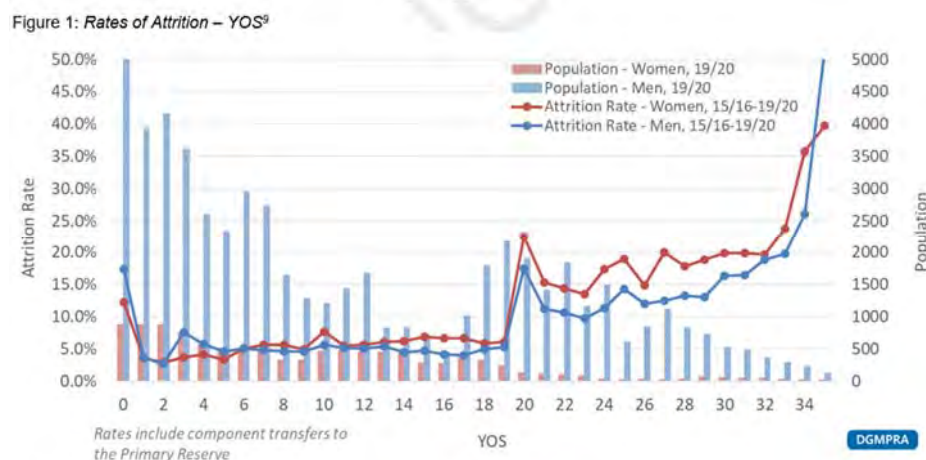
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<sup>93</sup> Department of National Defence, DAOD 5002-9, *University Training Plan for Non-Commissioned Members - Regular Force*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2015).

<sup>94</sup> Department of National Defence, DAOD 5002-11, *Special Commissioning Plan*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2016).

<sup>95</sup> Lenora Collins, email with author, 29 March 2021.

2000s, which extended the TOS by five years, including those enrolled under IE 20.<sup>96</sup> It is expected that attrition through retirement will again increase in the next several years as those who accepted IE 25 become eligible for retirement.<sup>97</sup> As depicted in figure 3.0 below, a spike in releases is evident at 20 YOS as members completed IE20. This increase in retirements is expected again in the next several years as IE 25 TOS begin to expire. The NWO occupation for example, will see nearly 40% of all engagements expire in the next 6.5 years.<sup>98</sup> This presents potential incentive for members to release from the service. The number of women retiring after their TOS ends is notably higher than men, though reasons for this difference are presently unknown.<sup>99</sup> Additional analysis is required to that end such that an appropriate action plan is developed.



**Figure 3.0 Rates of Attrition Based on YOS**

Source: Draft Retention Strategy - Annex D, Chief of Military Personnel

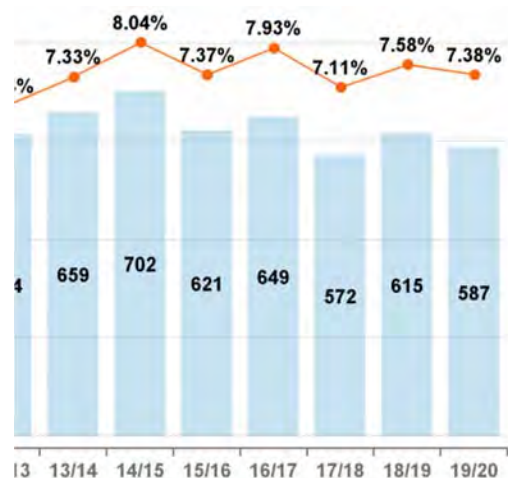
<sup>96</sup> Department of National Defence, *CF Mil Pers 05/05 - Terms of Service*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 16 March 2018), Appendix 1, Annex A, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Members that signed IE 20 were defaulted to IE 25 if they were not at OFP when the change took effect.

<sup>98</sup> Jason Aitken, “NWO: 2020/2021 AMOR,” Ottawa, ON, 17 November 2020, with permission.

<sup>99</sup> Department of National Defence, *Draft CAF Retention Strategy*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, February 2021, Annex D, 1.

As seen in figure 3.1 below, last year attrition yielded a loss of approximately 7.38% of RCN sailors, or 587 trained sailors.<sup>100</sup> Retired RCN Commander Ken Hansen reflects that a loss rate of 5% was considered a “serious situation” in the past.<sup>101</sup> As shown below, the RCN has lost an average of 7.44% over the last eight years. Although some consider this relatively good compared to the CAF, the number remains alarming considering the number of stressed occupations in the RCN. These numbers indicate that current retention plans are insufficient to address personnel stability issues plaguing RCN occupations. The navy has a relatively small footprint when compared against the CAF, so losses are significant. Compounded with a growing fleet in both platforms and positions, impact to operations is certain.



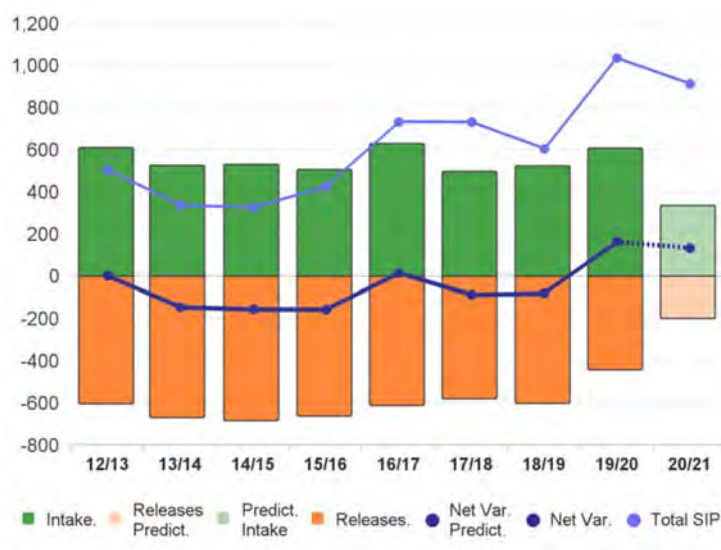
**Figure 3.1 RCN Releases by Year**

Source: RCN Managed Workforce Health, Director Naval Personnel

<sup>100</sup> Department of National Defence, *RCN Managed Workforce Health - Releases*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, March 2021).

<sup>101</sup> Global News, “Royal Canadian Navy Culture Barrier to Recruitment Efforts: Retired Commander,” last accessed 4 March 2021. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4972600/retired-commander-canadian-navy/>.

Figure 3.2 below reveals the difference between the number of personnel releasing versus the overall RCN intake. With the exception of FY 2019/20, the number of RCN releases over the last eight years have either exceeded intake or scarcely been below it. While this model reveals the overall trend in releases across the navy, it is not representative of specific occupations. However, as shown in figure 3.3 below, these differences are increasingly concerning for many occupations. The overall downward trend in trained strength is compounded by insufficient recruiting, necessitating a bold plan for the RCN to reduce releases. Especially for smaller occupations, where losses are noticeable and more vulnerable to negative operational impacts.

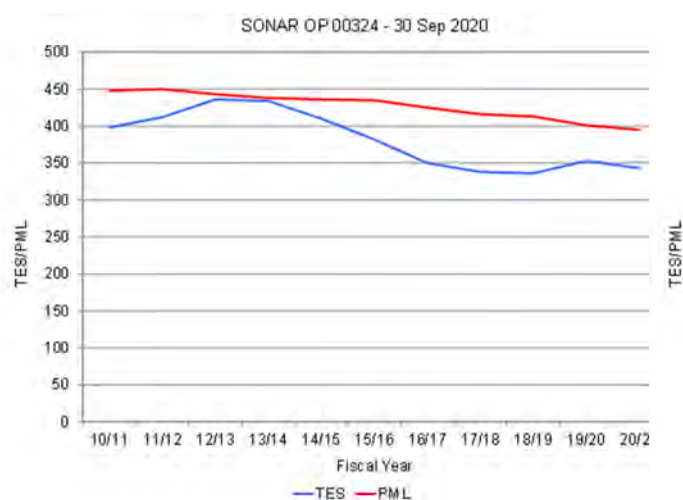


**Figure 3.2 Intake versus Releases of RCN Managed Occupations**

Source: RCN Managed Workforce Health, Director Naval Personnel

The BOSN, CL DVR and STWD occupations are typically more stable than other naval occupations, which are presently well under strength. Data from the 2020 AMORS reveals that

the SONAR OP occupation saw more members released than recruited for six consecutive years.<sup>102</sup> The graph below reveals increases in the manning gap from FY 2013/14 until FY 2019/20 where releases exceeded intake. Intake numbers have since increased gradually, with the exception of this year due to COVID-19 processing delays. TES levels have, therefore, dropped in FY 20/21, but its poor stability remains relatively constant as the establishment has also seen slight reduction in numbers. As of the Fall 2020 AMOR, only six out of 70 in the approved SIP had been enrolled in the RCN, or 9% of the occupation's demand signal.<sup>103</sup> These shortages have trended for several years and should give pause on the enduring impact it has had on numerous occupations. Any significant increase in attrition, combined with sustained insufficient recruiting, will strain an occupation and increase future challenges, including the likelihood of additional releases.



**Figure 3.3 SONAR OP TES vs Positions**

Source: AMOR 2020 SONAR OP, Director Naval Personnel

<sup>102</sup> Carlos Esquivel, "Sonar Operator: 2020/2021 AMOR," Ottawa, ON, 17 November 2020, with permission.

<sup>103</sup> Department of National Defence, *Record of Discussion: RCN Annual Military Occupation Review 2020 - Annex A*, (National Defence Headquarters: file 3371-5555-1), January 2021, 5.

Keeping trained, experienced members in uniform for as long as possible is the goal of any occupation, but the reality is that people leave the forces for several reasons. Combined with low intake and overall increase in the establishment over the next several years, retention in the RCN must be fully realized and mitigated where possible. If not, the RCN will be faced with shortages in personnel and skills that may necessitate a renewed plan on platform delivery and use. There will simply not be enough personnel, with the requisite skills and knowledge, to address future naval operations.

Unplanned attrition raises greater concern than at any point in recent history. As RCN strength remains low, critical vulnerabilities become increasingly probable. The RCN must continue to mitigate these releases, which includes clear understanding and appreciation of life in the service for its members.

## **JOINING THE RCN**

Individuals join the RCN for many reasons, including the opportunity to travel the world, learn a trade through subsidized education, and duty to one's country, to name a few. Advertising campaigns, family, or friends may spark interest, but joining the RCN is heavily influenced by personality, occupation fit, lifestyle and other personal factors.<sup>104</sup> When surveyed, sailors ranked “pay and benefits”, “career opportunities” and “pride in one’s job” as most influential in decisions to enroll.<sup>105</sup> This is somewhat expected of anyone seeking an interesting career, but not completely different than what is being offered outside of the military. However, serving in the RCN is certainly unique among other options and must not be lost to those who chose a career at sea.

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<sup>104</sup> Lisa Williams, Krystal Hachey, and Line St-Pierre, Defence Research and Development Canada Technical Memorandum DGMPRA TM 2010-026, *Navy Recruiting and Applicant Attraction*, (Defence Research and Development Canada, 2010), 17.

<sup>105</sup> Lisa Williams, Krystal Hachey, and Line St-Pierre, Defence Research and Development..., 18.

Additionally, when asked reasons for joining, most sailors indicated “adventure” and opportunity to “see the world and get paid to do it” excited them about the RCN. While such reasons are common to other components, many are unique to the navy. Interestingly, many reasons identified for joining are also tied to reasons to leave. Is the navy targeting the right person for a career at sea and is leadership doing everything they can to keep the right ones interested in continued service? Getting the right person to join the navy is critical to the stability of an occupation. Bolstering numbers to balance the force without necessary filtering will only lead to additional manning problems. Focused attraction, recruiting, and retention campaigns are necessary to that end. While achieving recruiting targets is challenging without additional layers, screening individuals early to ensure the RCN is the right fit will alleviate attrition in later, more critical years. This includes a full disclosure of what to expect of life at sea, which may not be fully addressed during initial recruiting interviews.

While many difficulties are associated with life at sea, so too are there numerous reasons to enjoy life in the navy. The two most significant satisfiers for those serving in the navy include camaraderie and interesting or exciting work.<sup>106</sup> The strong bonds created among fellow members sharing a living space combined with the one-of-a-kind experience of life at sea are understandably important for those serving in the navy.<sup>107</sup> In addition to those two motifs, training and skills acquisition, job benefits, and meaningful work/identity are among the other common satisfiers.<sup>108</sup> Understanding these factors are key in recruiting and retention strategies to promote and highlight the benefits of serving in the RCN.

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<sup>106</sup> Joanna Anderson, Erin Wing, and Inez Dekker, Defence Research and Development Canada Scientific Report DRDC-RDDC-2018-R307, *Retention and Attrition in the Hard Sea Occupations*, (Defence Research and Development Canada, 2018), 8.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

To encourage the viability of the navy as a career option, the navy must continue to acknowledge and decrease the dissatisfiers, while focusing on increasing the satisfiers. The navy must acknowledge why members join the navy and look to ensure those reasons are satisfied. If not, the service stands to lose its members to a civilian life where the next job is more attractive and transparent. Targeted generations are looking for multiple careers in a lifetime, which is an additional threat the forces must consider. If the navy does not immediately address these issues, the RCN stands to lose more sailors and the personnel problem becomes more alarming and impactful to future operations.

### **UNDERSTANDING DISSATISFIERS**

Several studies have been conducted to reveal reasons why people leave the RCN. Additional context on the manning challenge faced by the organization is essential in understanding the problem, but it also highlights areas requiring focused improvement. The 2018 Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) study on retention and attrition in the hard sea occupations provided the RCN with comprehensive analysis of strengths in the organization, while providing recommendations to improve career satisfaction and reduce attrition among the ranks.<sup>109</sup> To prevent further instability in occupations and ensure the RCN is equipped with the right personnel to lead the future fleet, these recommendations must be actioned. While some results found in the analysis are common to most CAF occupations, most are specific to a career at sea and thus unique to the RCN. Indeed, most issues identified relate to personnel gaps across the occupations.

There are a number of factors that contribute to displeasure in naval service requiring attention. The primary dissatisfaction in the RCN is the frequency and unpredictability of

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<sup>109</sup> Joanna Anderson, Erin Wing, and Inez Dekker, *Defence Research and Development...*, i.



sailing.<sup>110</sup> This is unsurprising as most people prefer a balanced work schedule such that family or personal time is enjoyed on a regular and consistent basis. The nature of business at sea makes this a particularly difficult issue to remedy in the navy, but it still represents most sailors' common concern. Other factors contributing to sailors' distaste include career progression, leadership, lack of meaningful work, quality of life aboard ship, problems with CAF administration, issues alongside, equipment and maintenance, postings, and pay and benefits.<sup>111</sup> The relatively high sea-to-shore ratio represents a significant issue for most sailors as balance of positions at-sea to positions ashore does not provide the relief sailors seek in work-to-life balance.<sup>112</sup> These factors are significant, though some are of more concern than others and some are more easily tailored to achieve the desired effect. While frequency of sailing and sea-to-shore ratios can be creatively managed, sailors are expected to sail and must do so in order to progress. Other factors, such as meaningful work, leadership, and quality of life are more easily alleviated. However, the navy is slow in making these changes, risking further attrition.

The RCN has mitigated fleet manning shortages by managing extended, normal, and high readiness postures that the navy cycles through depending on readiness level required by each unit. Each formation has ships in varying degrees of operational tempo, which provide a pool from which sailors may be chosen to fill shortages in priority sea-going units. Regardless of the ship's program, most occupations are understaffed, which equates to more sailing, often through attached postings, and working extended hours compared to the past.<sup>113</sup> Occupations short of personnel often experience 'pier head jumping', which sees an individual return from sea and

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>112</sup> Joanna Anderson, Erin Wing, and Inez Dekker, *Defence Research and Development...*, i.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

‘jump’ from one pier, or ship, to the next departing ship that is understaffed. This is a dissatisfaction for some, especially for those consistently ‘hand-picked’ or targeted for recurring employment outside of home unit. There is also a perception that the same sailors are sought out for these vacancies, which is also a dissatisfier for those not selected to sail as it is perceived as a negative reflection on them.<sup>114</sup> These often, unexpected attached postings to ships, are known contributors to junior members releasing from the RCN.<sup>115</sup> Though intended to mitigate manning issues, the consequence of short-term postings is actually making them worse.

The reality of sailing is that family and personal commitments are either paused, or being managed by others until a sailor returns from duty. This leads to the two greatest reasons why members decide to leave the navy. First, the impact on family, followed by too much time away from home.<sup>116</sup> While several other reasons were identified, these two were significantly higher than the others. Too much sea time has been a reason to leave the RCN for decades and will likely continue to be an issue for future generations.<sup>117</sup> The navy acknowledged this issue with a recent policy on time away from home port which sees formation commander oversight on any sailor exceeding 180 days at sea in one year.<sup>118</sup> Significant research has been conducted to reveal the importance of certainty in one's schedule, which has been associated with higher levels of mental and physical health.<sup>119</sup> This in turn can affect a member's suitability for continued service and may result in increased attrition. While some mitigations are in place to manage extensive

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Wilfred G. Lund, “The Rise and Fall of the Royal Canadian Navy...,” 537.

<sup>118</sup> Department of National Defence, *NAVGEN 017/19, RCN Personnel Tempo* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2019),

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<sup>119</sup> Joanna Anderson, Erin Wing, and Inez Dekker, *Defence Research and Development...*, 74.

time away, new applicants must be informed of the reality of life in the navy well before the navy invests heavily in their training

The lack of commitment from enrollees is alarming and worthy of attention. Nearly a quarter of new sailors polled on intentions to leave within one year of service indicated they were either: uncertain, probably going to leave, or they would definitely leave.<sup>120</sup> When asked about intentions to leave within five years, 40.6% of respondents indicated they would probably, or definitely leave.<sup>121</sup> Considering the military's need for members to make a career out of the military, this relatively high number of non-committed members is an area for concern. Inability to retain members at this stage in one's career must be immediately addressed. Long waiting times and backlogs have been noteworthy reasons, though deeper analysis is required to address the root cause. The CAF struggles to meet RCN intake goals and must do everything possible to retain members at all levels. Recruiting effort and subsequent resources are wasted in these losses and contribute to failed attempts in stabilizing occupations.

Long before the pandemic's impact at the Basic Training Level (BTL), or period of training before qualifying in occupation, throughput was an issue. Recruits have expressed that recruiting centre processing times, followed by bottlenecks at basic occupational training, are early dissatisfiers in the organization. Potential applicants have described the recruiting process as "unsatisfactory owing to the lengthy processing time, ambiguity of information and difficulty in navigating through the online application portal."<sup>122</sup> The issue of long processing times has not been sufficiently addressed and has resulted in a significant loss of potential recruits. A reduction in processing times must occur for timely recovery of occupational stability.

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Department of National Defence, *Joint CDS/DM Directive: OPERATION GENERATION*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 28 May 2018), 4.

Notwithstanding the impediment of throughput due to the pandemic, the complaint endures. Similarly, long training times are of particular concern to the RCN as essential, new recruits are forced to wait for occupational training. Risk of attrition at this point is high.

Increasing the number of recruits in the training system is a dilemma for the organization. While the RCN demands an increase in personnel, the training system also becomes strained, resulting in increased attrition. In addition to losses at the end of a TOS (see figure 3.0), the other major release point is within the first year of enrollment, when approximately 85% of recruits leave.<sup>123</sup> In the RCN, recovery of personnel strength is again inhibited by significant loss, whereby 25-50% of the NWO BTL has been lost over each of the last four years.<sup>124</sup> The number of members exiting the forces before they are even trained is of growing concern for the RCN. Overall, the number of personnel on the BTL is insufficient to bridge the trained strength gap.

In addition to vacancies created when a member leaves the service, the credibility of the navy may also be at risk. Members who leave the organization unhappy can influence potential applicants, just as they can influence people to join. This bad publicity by word-of-mouth can significantly affect potential recruits and perceived attitudes towards the organization.<sup>125</sup> Friends and family are significant factors contributing to interest in the navy, and negativity will inhibit recruiting and retention efforts. Unfavourable press is counterproductive to CAF force generation goals and raises doubt about the organization for both serving and non-serving members. Reducing negative influences is integral to a balanced, healthy workforce.

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<sup>123</sup> Department of National Defence, *Draft CAF Retention Strategy...*, 1.

<sup>124</sup> Department of National Defence, *Record of Discussion: RCN Annual Military Occupation Review 2020 - Annex A*, (National Defence Headquarters: file 3371-5555-1), January 2021, 10.

<sup>125</sup> Bert H.J. Schreurs and Fariya Syed. "Battling the War for Talent: An Application in a Military Context." *Career Development International* 16, no. 1 (2011): 48, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/849331374?pq-origsite=summon>.

What is too much sailing and how can this be managed? This is a highly variable data point that is difficult to quantify. The navy is mandated to sail, and so ships shall leave home ports and conduct business at sea and abroad. Sailors understand the operational needs of the navy. However, RCN resources and personnel deficiencies will continue to impede retention unless mitigating action is taken.<sup>126</sup> Analysis and planning to reduce known dissatisfiers, while managing as much as possible, future ones are pivotal to the recovery and future viability of naval occupations.

## **CULTURE**

Navy culture, particularly in a ship, is extremely influential to the professional and personal satisfaction to life in the RCN. Culture in the navy is highly influenced and variable between ships, departments, and among messes, and is often influenced, both good and bad, by a ship's command team.<sup>127</sup> As navy culture has been studied as a potential source of attrition, it deserves equal attention when discussing current factors facing losses in the RCN. Navy culture must conform to modern CAF and social standards, a challenge for a service that has prided itself in tradition.

As expected of any modern organization, the navy has seen many changes to its culture, but opinions on these changes are mixed. While some changes are positive, a substantial number of sailors suggest that it has led to reduction in camaraderie, loss of naval traditions, and overall decrease in morale across the navy.<sup>128</sup> Some underlying issues related to these changes will resolve over time as new recruits join and experience the navy's new culture as normal. Leadership engagement and oversight will remain critical to this change, as will being mindful

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<sup>126</sup> Joanna Anderson, Erin Wing, and Inez Dekker, *Defence Research and Development...*, 25.

<sup>127</sup> Joanna Anderson, Erin Wing, and Inez Dekker, *Defence Research and Development...*, 74.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

that newcomers are likely to establish their own culture. While change can be difficult in a long standing organization like the navy, sailors are acknowledging a positive cultural change towards greater inclusion of women, people of various ethnicities, religions and families.<sup>129</sup> The navy is slowly progressing these efforts, making the necessary changes to effect a more modern, desirable navy for all. Progress here must endure if the navy wishes to remain viable as a career option for an increasingly diverse country.

## CIVIL SECTOR

*OPERATION GENERATION* makes an important declaration on changing demographics that affect the desire for Canadians to join the military. It acknowledges rapid pace of change in society and resulting competition for available talent between the CAF and industry.<sup>130</sup> While the recruiting end of the personnel management spectrum remains important, demographics also influence a member's decision to leave the service and there is a need for the military to act now before it is too late.

Demand for highly trained and skilled workers continues to rise in the private sector and represents a potential draw for sailors in which the RCN has invested heavily. The high level of experience, training, and education that the navy provides to sailors has become increasingly appealing to potential employers and a growing number of civilian jobs.<sup>131</sup> In the face of a highly competitive civil sector, this presents a challenge to retain talent within the service.

Additionally, wage premiums offered are comparatively high to many military occupations. The influence of 'pay' to join the CAF represents a significant pull towards the civil

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>130</sup> Department of National Defence, *Standing Operations Order - OPERATION GENERATION*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 20 March 2019), 2.

<sup>131</sup> Naval Studies Board, *Manpower and Personnel Needs for a Transformed Naval Force*, (Washington: The National Academies Press, 2008), 49.

sector.<sup>132</sup> The navy spends enormous amounts of time and money on training. When combined with the level of experience gained in the fleet, particularly in technical occupations, employers are keen to offer significant paychecks that ultimately result in members leaving the forces. Given the prospect of increased pay, relinquishment of unlimited liability, and other compelling reasons, the challenge of retaining talent in the navy becomes clear.

### **AN OVERDUE STRATEGY**

Whereas the RCN analyses trends and determines innovative ways to prevent attrition, MILPERSCOM remains responsible for developing CAF retention strategies. In 2009, a retention strategy was created to deal with various aspects of retention across all military occupations; however, it was never fully implemented.<sup>133</sup> Five years later, the CAF Retention Working Group revised the retention strategy, which was to be completed by June 2018.<sup>134</sup> At the time of writing, the strategy still remains in draft.

While some past progress was made, a renewed retention strategy provides the CAF and L1s with organizational changes and focused retention efforts required to address ongoing personnel challenges. The strategy is intended to help CAF members understand retention issues and provide direction and guidance on related matters.<sup>135</sup> It is being developed in direct response to CAF diversity initiatives and the SSE directive to retain existing talent.<sup>136</sup> Despite delays to release the strategy, it signifies that the CAF has an approach to the problem. However, it is not a strategy in itself that stops releases, it is appropriate and effective action that generates results.

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<sup>132</sup> Government of Canada, “GC Jobs: Job Search,” last accessed 8 March 2021. <https://emploisfp-psjobs.cfp-psc.gc.ca/psrs-srpf/applicant/page2440?fromMenu=true&toggleLanguage=en>.

<sup>133</sup> Canada, Auditor General of Canada, *Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting and Retention - National Defence*, Report 5 in Auditor General Status Report (November 2016), 19.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Department of National Defence, *Draft CAF Retention Strategy...*, 12.

<sup>136</sup> Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged...*, 107.

Regardless, an expeditious release of this strategy is a critical step in reduction of unplanned releases and will help focus efforts toward occupational stability.

In the absence of a published strategy, retention in the CAF has been managed ad hoc. This new strategy provides formal guidance to L1 and L2s on development of action plans encompassing all levels of the organization.<sup>137</sup> In order to retain talent, reduce unwanted attrition, and sustain occupational capabilities, six lines of effort (LOE) have been proposed in the *CAF Retention Strategy*. The LOE seeks to communicate priorities, improve governance and cultural awareness surrounding retention, including support to member's careers and the wellness of their families, and adopt a comprehensive approach to retention.<sup>138</sup> This plan's strengths include reporting by a performance measurement framework to provide additional analysis and continued improvement to the strategy.<sup>139</sup> The efforts identified in the strategy are largely inherent in good leadership, but have not been sufficiently addressed en masse in the past.

The retention strategy is a broad approach to identifying and providing additional solutions to the manning problems in many military occupations. Adherence to this document will be a cornerstone to future retention efforts and marks a significant shift as organizations focus to preserve talent in individuals. To be truly effective, the plan must be enveloped by the entire organization and endure well into the future.

In addition to the overall goals of the *CAF Retention Strategy*, the RCN must also fully understand why people join the navy, but just as important is understanding what they do not like about serving in the RCN. Getting the wrong people through the recruiting process, only to find they do not like the particular service they have entered is a waste of resources. It is discouraging

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<sup>137</sup> Department of National Defence, *Draft CAF Retention Strategy...*, 3.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



to the member, and provides a false sense of manning stability if the member is ultimately going to leave the occupation. This is no easy task for the RCN given unique requirements as a sea-going service, which are often not realized by new enrollees until well into a career in the service. While the navy has demonstrated some creative ideas to close the manning gap and prevent loss of trained and experienced sailors, further efforts must be done to ensure operational effectiveness into the future. New strategies and initiatives are being developed for a sustainable navy, but given persistent shortages, time for action is running short. According to existing data, manning instabilities have always existed for the RCN, but given the current gap in strength and fleet recapitalization in coming decades, the navy is at even greater risk of not putting ships to sea. The existing middle management talent is essential in fleet transformation from legacy to new, and these ranks are thin.

### **CHANGE TO RETAIN**

Manning shortages create dissatisfaction within the RCN, which is directly related to a member's desire to leave the organization early. Given past recruiting challenges and overall low number of naval personnel, minimizing incessant attrition is more critical than ever.

To this end, the RCN has been actively engaged in a retention plan that has yielded relatively stable attrition numbers over several years. In effort to reduce time away from home, each formation has mirrored training such that members can train on the coast in which they live and serve.<sup>140</sup> Before this “two coast model” was implemented, training could require a member to temporarily relocate to the opposite coast to receive a desired qualification. This is a benefit to both the member and organization, which ultimately contributes to the reduction of early

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<sup>140</sup> Government of Canada, “RCN Focused on Quality of Life for Sailors,” last accessed 25 February 2021, <http://www.navy-marine.forces.gc.ca/en/news-operations/news-view.page?doc=rcn-focused-on-quality-of-life-for-sailors/jujy916n>.

attrition. While improvements to the training system have been made, temporary relocations are still expected, notably for specialized training.

Access to social media and ship scheduling has been problematic in the navy. The addition of wifi in ships has given sailors the ability to use personal devices to communicate from coastal regions to family and friends ashore.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, the navy has tried to mitigate the impact on sailors and their families' ability to plan personal lives by declassifying the ship's operational schedule, including long-term expectations for the ship's movements.<sup>142</sup> Given the first dissatisfaction in the navy remains unpredictability of sailing and time away from home as the most cited reason for leaving, these changes highlight the RCN's willingness to adapt business to meet members' desires. These progressive changes are essential to appease the new generation of sailors, and dissuade interest in employment elsewhere. Further mitigation of dissatisfiers will reduce attrition, which must remain a focus for the RCN.

The RCN is undertaking modernization in most occupations to remain relevant to future operations of the 'One Navy'. The occupation analysis' aim to improve and change existing occupational structures and career options, and include the creation of RegF occupations into the ResF. In doing so, members will be able to move more seamlessly between components, giving members greater flexibility and career options, while remaining in the CAF. The wider CAF employment model, named the Adaptive Career Path, includes revised conditions of service and better leave options to accommodate family needs.<sup>143</sup> A number of other improvements are expected to come from the various occupation analyses meant to improve attractiveness of occupations, both internally and externally. However, occupational changes that look appealing

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> Department of National Defence, *Draft CAF Retention Strategy...*, 1.

on paper do not necessarily reveal hidden issues that become apparent in practice.

Implementation of these occupations must, therefore, be carefully monitored and adjusted as necessary to meet personnel and occupational needs.

In 2018, a retention position was created at DNavP to bolster retention efforts through direct contact with releasing members. The CRCN at the time was briefed every month on the status of each individual seeking release and the reasons why. This information was collated for further analysis and ultimately used in development of the *CAF Retention Strategy*. The role of the retention position was eventually divested to the OMs, who will execute the *Strategy* when released. This new OM task must be prioritized by the RCN given the seriousness of losing existing talent.

The RCN has acknowledged the criticality of retention and seeks to make necessary changes to keep sailors in uniform. The navy must continue to evolve and adapt its retention plan alongside the *CAF Retention Strategy* to retain talent it desperately needs. The RCN has positioned itself to mitigate overall retention among its ranks. Despite relatively stable attrition and a relatively successful recruiting year, it would be premature and imprudent to overlook retention management.<sup>144</sup> The navy must continue to evolve a retention strategy that supports a stable, balanced workforce, which at present is thinning out by choice.

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<sup>144</sup> David G. Allen, Phillip C. Bryant, and James M. Vardaman, "Retaining Talent..." 48.

## CONCLUSION

The challenge of recruiting and retaining the RCN's most valuable asset, its people, is significant. History has revealed that achieving and maintaining a workforce balance is evasive and difficult to manage, but is critical to achieve in order for the armed forces to deliver when the government seeks military action. A decade of intermittent recruiting has created a gap in RCN manning with implications for a reduced force and greater emphasis on an enduring plan to retain its skilled members. Close management of personnel is necessary as the RCN addresses shortcomings and attempts to restore most occupations to healthy levels.

Some progress has been made in recruiting, but that at best is only temporary given the CAF's previous reticence for an enduring attraction and recruiting campaign. Inefficiencies in force generation of personnel and organizational lines of effort reveal the need for a systematic, comprehensive approach to recruiting. Intake requirements are not being sufficiently addressed, resulting in the widening of personnel gaps and subsequent rise in operational vulnerability. Will the latest recruiting techniques bring in a sufficient number of people? Changes in attraction techniques, including up-to-date recruiting videos and Canadian wide engagement, aim to increase awareness of the RCN across the country while seeking potential enrollees into a growingly desperate service. Although the CAF continues to prioritize recruiting, recent trends in manning shortages reveals the RCN is challenged to achieve occupational stability, which will continue to have an enduring impact if personnel generation goals are not met.

Failures in the recruiting process and insufficient action in addressing them have created significant gaps in manning that will take some RCN occupations decades before occupational stability is achieved. Overall growth in the organization has further compounded personnel shortages, stretching RCN capabilities and raising questions on the viability of the planned future

fleet. Training throughput continues to be a limiting factor in personnel production, a problem exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The present manning shortages in the RCN are persistent and have created a vulnerability that will affect operational effectiveness well into the future.

Appropriate manning and personnel policies shall become critical in attracting people to join the service, and even more critical, to create a workplace that encourages members to remain in uniform for as long as the contracted period of service. Individuals have all sorts of motivations and reasons for joining and staying in the RCN, which may change from younger to older years. Given persistent challenges in recruiting, retaining members in the RCN is more dire than recent past. As the navy prepares to transition to a revitalized fleet, existing talent and experience will be critical in preparing the next generation for success at sea.

The delicate balance of finding the right number of personnel at the right time is clearly an elusive goal. To counter that challenge, several mitigating strategies and initiatives have been developed with varying degrees of efficacy. These strategies must be adaptive and innovative in order to remain relevant to changing demographics and influences of society. They must also endure and not lose momentum when success looms. As the past has shown, occupational stability does not need to be defined in the extremes.

In addition to developing modern retention strategies and initiatives, leadership across the organization must seize available opportunities to minimize dis-satisfiers and leverage those satisfiers that reside within their control. Communication is instrumental in promotion of well-being among sailors, which includes listening and clarification on areas of concern. Focusing on the positive aspects of life in uniform, including medical/dental benefits, job security, and retirement options to name a few, serve to bolster and remind members of the strengths behind

their career choice. The impact of personnel shortages is more challenging to solve in the short term, but deliberate, focused, and creative action by leadership helps set the course for workforce stability in the future RCN.

The personnel generation problems are highlighted by the challenges associated with transitioning to a future fleet. Consequently, the forces' ability to deliver services for the government into the future is in question. The CAF faces fulfilling international and domestic requirements on behalf of the Government of Canada (GoC) or scaling back its ambitions. Insufficient personnel strength compromises the ability to provide services to the GoC for the money spent on the armed forces. At some point, the government will rightly ask why it is spending so much money and getting so little in return.

Unless personnel shortages are sufficiently addressed, the RCN will not have enough staff, or requisite skills, to support the growing fleet. Without the necessary staff, the RCN will require a renewed plan for operations at sea, which may include tying up or decommissioning ships in the near future. Given the plan to increase the overall size of the navy, a reduction in naval combat readiness or capability due to personnel shortages is not a favourable option for the CAF. The RCN cannot maintain what it has now with the personnel available or projected in the foreseeable future. The personnel problem will only get worse.

New ships rely more heavily on automation, which implies that personnel requirements in each new platform will be lower compared to legacy crew complements. However, ashore numbers and the number of maintainers to serve the equipment will increase. While each new platform will be crewed by fewer sailors, the overall number of vessels will exceed the existing fleet. The transition from legacy to the new fleet is expected to last well into the next decade, placing additional strain on sea-going personnel. Regardless of occupation, the personnel

recruited today will influence future fleet operations. Overall, operations and technology may change, but demand for capable personnel, especially to service the machines, remains constant.

Canada's relatively small navy does not have a particularly high profile domestically, largely because it favours operations away from North America. This results in reduced visibility and general public ignorance toward Canada's navy. Contrasted to the army, the RCN does not receive public attention drawn to noteworthy involvement in floods, forest fires, and general connection with citizens. Recasting the RCN as a continental and domestic force will make the necessary connections with the public and showcase the navy as a viable career option. However, focusing operations domestically will involve a substantial cultural change in the RCN.

Despite past recommendations and improvements to bolster the number of personnel serving, balancing the workforce is challenging, and is likely to continue well into the future. The path to recovery and balancing RCN occupational strength is clear. The RCN must focus on restoring occupational stability, while continuously developing tailored ways of maintaining that balance once achieved. The current gap in RCN manning is significant, putting all strategies and initiatives to the ultimate test: restoring naval occupational stability before RCN credibility is lost.

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