

## Archived Content

Information identified as archived on the Web is for reference, research or record-keeping purposes. It has not been altered or updated after the date of archiving. Web pages that are archived on the Web are not subject to the Government of Canada Web Standards.

As per the [Communications Policy of the Government of Canada](#), you can request alternate formats on the "[Contact Us](#)" page.

## Information archivée dans le Web

Information archivée dans le Web à des fins de consultation, de recherche ou de tenue de documents. Cette dernière n'a aucunement été modifiée ni mise à jour depuis sa date de mise en archive. Les pages archivées dans le Web ne sont pas assujetties aux normes qui s'appliquent aux sites Web du gouvernement du Canada.

Conformément à la [Politique de communication du gouvernement du Canada](#), vous pouvez demander de recevoir cette information dans tout autre format de rechange à la page « [Contactez-nous](#) ».

## **Restructuring Reserve Units - The Future of the Army?**

“For The Elgins, and for Canada and its Armed Forces, re-rolling was, and will continue to be, an outstanding success.”

*Lieutenant Colonel D.K Nicholson  
Commanding Officer 31 CER (The Elgins)*



The future of the Army is more unforeseeable today than it has been for decades. The burnout of personnel, coupled with the difficulty in recruiting has left the Forces in a desperate position that requires immediate attention. Equipment rust out further complicates the matter by not having enough capital to purchase replacements. Finally, there are many functions performed by the Reserve that are not required by the Regular Force, such as reconnaissance and armour. The difficulty in performing these tasks well is due in part by the high level of continuation training needed to remain competent with the equipment. The Senior Leadership of the Land Force recognizes the need to integrate the Reserve and Regular force and has looked at many ways to remedy the situation. Many initiatives have been put in place from recruiting to equipment purchase and an attempt at restructuring the Reserve. One-approach centres on re-rolling Reserve Force

Units into functions that could compliment and, in some cases supplement the Regular Force when required. LGen Jeffery, the Chief of the Land Staff, recently issued a statement on the status of LFRR.

A Strategic Plan has been designed to first improve the Reserves and in the longer term, to make them an integral part of the whole army...The process will include widespread and continuing consultation with all of the stakeholders in the Army and across the broad Army Reserve community.<sup>1</sup>

The statement went on to comment that LGen Jeffery intends to gain the full confidence of the Reserves, to ensure their long-term sustainability.

In 1996 the Land Force Reserve Restructure (LFRR) initiative was instituted with the intent of giving the direction necessary to begin the process of change. Unfortunately the initiative failed, because the members of the Reserve, due to a lack of consultation throughout the planning process, felt betrayed and would not accept the initiative. Immediately, the “Honouraries”<sup>2</sup> from Reserve Regiments brought politicians at the highest levels of government into the picture and appraised them of the situation, upon which the entire initiative was delayed while further study on restructuring was undertaken. A Parliamentary Monitoring Committee on Change was tasked with investigating what had gone wrong with the process. The committee stated;

The *Monitoring Committee* is concerned that stakeholders are not being engaged fully in the process. The Reserves role as a link to the community, at the very least, is no doubt being compromised by this lack of communication between the Army and the Reserve community.<sup>3</sup>

There are a number of aspects that were not considered by the Land Force Senior Leadership prior to announcing the LFRR plan; most notably, the lack of consultation, which ensured the resultant impasse and failure of the initiative. With the proper

preconditions in place the restructuring process could have proceeded to a successful conclusion.

To successfully assist in the restructuring of a reserve unit the following conditions must be met: acceptance by the unit, a competent training cadre must be provided and equipment and resources commensurate with the unit's mission must be made available. Examples drawn from the lessons learned while re-rolling The Elgin Regiment (Royal Canadian Armoured Corps) into 31 Combat Engineer Regiment (The Elgins) will support this thesis. Having proven that restructure can succeed, and faced with a future where these activities will become more prevalent, the Regular Force leaders must understand the preconditions for success to avoid future failures. If the previously mentioned parameters are met, the restructuring of other units becomes feasible. The Senior Leadership may use these measures for future LFRR initiatives.

The Elgin Regiment was re-rolled in 1997 from an Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment to 31 Combat Engineer Regiment (The Elgins). Since re-rolling, the Regiment has passed the Combat Readiness Evaluation.<sup>4</sup> In 1999 over 30 of 120 Units in the Land Reserve Force failed this evaluation.<sup>5</sup> The Regiment has won the Herzberg trophy twice, in 1998 and 1999, for completing the best engineer task by a reserve engineer unit. The Herzberg trophy is awarded annually by the Military Engineer Association of Canada and is highly regarded by Military Engineers countrywide.

In May 2000, Mr. John Fraser was commissioned by the government to prepare a report with a view to solving an impasse created with the Land Force Reserve Restructuring initiative. The first paragraph of the Fraser Report clearly states the gravity



of the problems faced:

The future of Canada's reserve forces, particularly the Army Reserves, is in crisis. Army Reserve strength is at less than 60% of the level directed by government, the reserves community and National Defence Headquarters have become alienated on many fundamental matters affecting the Reserves and there is nation-wide concern that the Army Reserves, or Militia, has been neglected to the point where its very survival as a national institution is in serious jeopardy.<sup>6</sup>

It is not the intention of this paper to review the entire Fraser report but to amplify one of the recommendations made in respect to the restructuring process:

The Regular Force must outline proposed roles for the reserves in general terms, including some introduction of non-traditional roles. Explain in common-sense terms why these changes are necessary under present and foreseeable conditions. Give assurance that most combat units will be retained even if some changes may be needed to ensure they are of viable size (e.g., "tactical groupings" of some units while retaining their traditional insignia).<sup>7</sup>

Clearly the approach to restructuring must be adapted so that future attempts will be successful. One of the major errors of the LFRR appeared to be a lack of consultation from the outset of the initiative. At the onset of the re-rolling process, the Commanding Officer of the selected unit should be approached by his Commander confidentially, thus avoiding rumors and speculation. A candid discussion with the unit leadership is essential to explain the situation and how the entire re-rolling will proceed. Options for

the type of unit they would become, based on the Army requirement, could be offered at this time. The Commanding Officer of the Elgin Regiment was approached by his Brigade Commander and was given the option of becoming an Engineer Regiment or downgrading to an Armoured Reconnaissance Squadron vice Regiment.<sup>8</sup> The Commanding Officer then spoke with the Senate<sup>9</sup> to get advice on which way to proceed. The consensus was to take the engineer option and this decision was conveyed to the Brigade Commander. The Commanding Officer informed the Regiment of the upcoming changes and presented all the ramifications that the re-rolling would entail. Early, timely, honest and appropriate consultation with the Commanding Officer allowed the entire process to proceed within the framework and subtleties of the Regimental hierarchy. An offer was also made to anyone in the Regiment who wished to remain armoured, that they would be afforded the opportunity to join another unit, but they were asked to wait through the winter before making their final decision. In the final analysis, only two members of the Regiment went to other units.

The main reason that the LFRR initiative failed was the lack of consultation between the Regular and Reserve force. This lack of consultation precipitated the intervention of the Reserves “Honouraries” which brought the process to a halt. To understand the Reserve Force one must delve into some of the differences between the Regular and Reserve Forces. The system of honorary appointments within the Regular Force is, for the most part, ceremonial and that distinction is quite different from the honouraries in the Reserve Force. The Honorary appointment within the Reserve is an aspect that is little understood by the members of the Regular Force. Each reserve unit may have one or two honouraries and their role is to provide assistance to the unit and

Reserve wherever necessary.<sup>10</sup> The majority of honouraries have been asked to join a unit because of their financial and/or political influence.

The modern practice of honorary regimental appointments dates back little more than a century, and it was probably not until after the First World War that the concept of the honorary appointee being a source of practical and moral support for his regiment, became widely established....open to non-military persons - who could supply money, influence and enthusiasm in return for the distinction conferred by honorary military rank - both reinforces the regional nature of the Militia and distinguishes between the roles of honorary appointments in the Regular Force and the Militia.

[http://www.armee.mdn.ca/reserves/Honouraries/Honouraries\\_e.htm](http://www.armee.mdn.ca/reserves/Honouraries/Honouraries_e.htm)



An interview with Honorary Lieutenant Colonel (HLCol) McCandless, the present HLCol of 31 Combat Engineer Regiment (The Elgins) lends insight into the power of the honouraries within the Reserves. The following anecdote certainly explains the honouraries influence quite succinctly:

When I commanded 22 Service Battalion in London in the eighties I received a call from the then District Commander, one of my former COs. The Federal Government was making loud noises about closing CFB London. I was told to call my Honorary Colonel, who had really done very little for the unit, and tell him that DND needed his help to save Base London. My Honorary and I spoke for about fifteen minutes and he said he would get back to me. A couple of days later his secretary called and told me to be at the London Club for lunch the next week. I arrived to find my Honorary, the District Commander and the Minister of Defence. We gave our orders to the waiter and my Honorary leaned over to the Minister of National Defence and he said "I'll make this brief so we can get on and enjoy our lunch. Mr. Minister, you close Base London and the Liberals will not elect a member here for two decades. Do you understand me?" The Minister assured him he understood. You know what? It was a great lunch, I never saw a single word in the media that the Minister of National Defence had

visited London nor was there another word about the closing of Base London until we had a different Government. Go figure.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the time the honouraries are not called in for such drastic circumstances; however, there are times when the Regiment is threatened and such action is required.

The Honorary Colonel, Lord Elgin, orchestrated the very survival of the Elgin Regiment in the nineties. HLCol McCandless cited this example:

When there was talk of a major overhaul of the reserves about six years ago, Andrew (Lord Elgin), on a visit to his Regiment -The Elgins- asked if he could be of any help. I explained some of our concerns and he wondered if a chat with the Prime Minister might help. I suggested that it couldn't hurt so on his return to Scotland via Ottawa, he called and arranged a brief visit with the PM. Some time later the CO of the Elgins was broached with the possibility of re-rolling as Engineers. Coincidence? Who knows? But it is my sincere belief that the proper honorary, with a sincere interest in a unit can be one of the most important aspects of any reserve unit.<sup>12</sup>

The examples clearly demonstrate the vast power held by the Honouraries and that they are not forces to be taken lightly when dealing with the Reserves. The Commanding Officer in concert with the Regimental Senate and Honoraries, properly consulted and in agreement should support the entire re-rolling process. The importance and necessity of stakeholder acceptance at this level is paramount if re-rolling is to be successful.

...Sensitivity to the customs and traditions which must be gradually set aside or altered to some degree to make way for new ones is a must since many of the personnel to be retrained have years invested in the Regiment as it was; sensitivity to the situation in which senior Regimental personnel find themselves as they undergo elementary level training with subordinates and peers; and, sensitivity to the community around the Regiment which has come to know and respect the Regiment as it was and is unsure what to look for in the future.<sup>13</sup>

As the Honouraries are considered integral to the units, so is the history and heritage of the unit. The unit's past reflects the soldiers and families that have given blood for their country, and all aspects of the heritage dynamic must be considered.



An expression often used when describing the Reserve is the “footprint on the community” and many units have roots in their communities dating back over 100 years. It is this passage of time and experience from which the units draw their lifeblood. There will undoubtedly be members of the unit who have lost family fighting and, as such, will be reluctant to change the status quo, particularly when it comes to unit insignia and traditions. The renaming and rebadging when re-rolling are areas where considerable compromise on the part of the Regular Force will pay huge dividends when trying to get the stakeholders to accept the process. When the Elgins re-rolled to engineers it seemed the loudest cry was to be the loss of the Elgin identity and disrespect for the Regiment's founder Lord Elgin. To help alleviate this problem the official designation became 31 Combat Engineer Regiment (The Elgins). Hand in hand with the name, traditional dates

and Patron Saints were also kept on the “Orbat.”<sup>14</sup> Looking from the macro scale these small details may seem petty, however, one must remember that each tradition may have its origin in human blood.

An important consideration with respect to Regimental heritage is the Regimental mess system. The system is designed to foster unit cohesion and esprit de corps. The messes are where traditions and lore are passed down from the generations of warriors who have gone on before. The various messes are steeped in tradition and, for the most part, have represented the centre of the regimental community for decades. Protecting these traditions, even though they may not be efficient or profitable, is a factor that must be considered.



To foster an acceptance of the restructured Regiment within the community, a strong information operations campaign must be launched. Among the most important aspects to consider is that the campaign must include a public relations plan; newspaper articles depicting the new unit, radio ads and a highly publicized re-rolling parade. The

unit must also be involved in civic functions and community service activities, as acceptance by the community will help to ensure the continued success of the unit.

Acceptance by the unit leadership, respect for tradition and heritage leaves the members of the unit in a positive state of mind about the restructuring process. A fact of life is that there will be the inevitable need to carry on with recruiting to the full potential of the community. Upon re-rolling, an opportunity exists to breathe new interest into the unit and this opportunity must not be lost. For the most part the reservist is the very fabric of Canadian society; he has a job, a family and is respected within the community in which he lives. The Regiment and the attraction for joining are usually adventure and camaraderie; and it is on these values that the Regimental system was built and has flourished over time. To entice young Canadians into joining the reserve, one must have something to offer that is not available at the workplace, such as driving a tank, blowing up a bridge or shooting a rifle. Having the ability to provide that sort of adventure gets the recruit in the door. It has been suggested, in the initial attempt at LFRR, as part of the restructuring initiative certain units would take over some of the Combat Service Support roles now performed by the Regular Force. One would think that if the Regular Force is having problems recruiting for the Service Support trades with the salary and benefits package offered, it may be very difficult to entice a young, adventure-seeking civilian into joining a laundry and bath unit. The concept of downloading the less glamorous tasks to the reserves will not be dwelt on, as any suggested outcome would only be speculation. The important fact to note is, that when choosing what mission you will give the new unit, one must be cognizant of the fact that the unit must be able to attract new members.

The recruit, having been properly and honestly enticed into joining the Regiment, must now be processed quickly before the anticipation wains. There are numerous examples of recruits having to wait months while the paperwork is completed. The end result is usually a prospective soldier finding another outlet for his energy and leaving with the impression that the Forces does not care. To ensure that the unit continues to grow once restructured, a priority must be placed on having a sharp, full time recruiter to ensure a steady stream of suitable recruits to replace those members of the unit who move on. Working hand in hand with the Recruiting Centres, the recruiter must go into the high schools, businesses and universities to seek recruits. The re-rolling process is well under way and now the entire task of training the old and the new must begin.



When re-rolling a unit, it is necessary to train the majority of the hierarchy within the unit. Great care must be taken to ensure that the senior leaders are given the training so the cohesion and confidence inherent in a unit will not be lost. In the short term,

leadership deficiencies can be overcome by the Regular Force training cadre. However, the unit will suffer in the long term with respect to succession and respect for the leadership. To ensure that all members of the unit are afforded the opportunity to reclassify with the appropriate level of training, commensurate with their present rank, courses must be tailored to each individual's circumstance. It is in the area of administering the training that the trainers must think "outside the box"<sup>15</sup> and provide new means to deliver training.

As the majority of the soldiers that will require retraining are already qualified in another trade, there is scope to be flexible in the conduct of the retraining. One option is to provide in-house instruction for senior courses. Most reservists have civilian jobs and cannot take the time to go away for long training courses at the training centers. The Reservists must usually request vacation time from their employers well in advance and if course dates change on short notice, which happens all too frequently, they will miss out on that course. Any loss of training opportunity leaves the unit with the resultant, untrained, disgruntled and unhappy soldier. To be able to conduct the in-house training, particular attention must be given by the career managers to instructional ability when selecting Regular Force personnel to be posted in. Given the time constraints, the planning for in-house exercises and courses must be meticulous. Vibrant, adventurous and exciting training must be provided for every training session. To achieve this level of planning, the Operations Officer should be an experienced and well-trained individual. A Warrant Officer between Regimental assignments is ideal. The Warrant Officer brings experience and knowledge to the table and is in a position to positively influence an entire generation of soldiers.

There exist a number of imperatives which cannot be ignored when a Regiment such as The Elgin Regiment (RCAC) is to be re-rolled. While all are critical to a greater or lesser degree, there is one imperative which is super-critical and on which the success or failure of the entire mission balances: People, the Regular Force Cadre tasked with leading the Regiment from its old role and into its new one.<sup>16</sup>

The Senior Leadership must instruct Career Managers to ensure that the calibre of personnel posted-in to conduct the re-rolling is commensurate with the task at hand. The Career Manager must also ensure that there is sufficient depth in the number of personnel that are provided to ensure that the individuals posted in will still be able to attend career courses. If there is a lack of billets at the unit to fulfill the needs of re-rolling, the Corps Senior Leadership must find them from other areas. Individuals posted into units should be top calibre with field and instructional experience. These qualities are required for instant credibility, particularly if there is an aura of mistrust, which may be prevalent during the re-rolling process. The personnel posted in must have proven instructional abilities, as they will in fact be running a school detachment without the support facilities afforded the permanent training facilities.

Fortune smiled upon The Elgins when the transition team of Combat Engineers was posted to St. Thomas. All were task oriented and prepared to do whatever it would take to make Combat Engineers of all the combat arms trades in the Regiment. The process was laborious to say the least but, in the end, produced young and enthusiastic reserve Combat Engineers capable of carrying out their tasks in an exemplary manner...and, much more importantly, have contributed, and continue to contribute, a sizeable number of soldiers and officers to Canada's efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo.<sup>17</sup>

A testament to the calibre of the personnel posted in to The Elgin Regiment to conduct the re-rolling was that they were all either promoted or sent on career courses, or both, during the retraining period. The fact that the upward career progression happened

built up confidence within the Regiment, trust in the cadre and a respect for the Regular Force. Gaining respect and trust is one of the key issues that must be dealt with when two organizations are working together. Regular visits and liaison between the Standards Cells of the schools and the units will ensure that the required standard is being taught despite the remote locations that could be involved.

There are a number of technological advances in the area of “distance learning” that will assist in this area. The number of courses that can be incorporated into exercises will vary with the unit; however, the training must provide a level of excitement and adventure that will guarantee good attendance. Practical ways of mitigating a quorum include consulting with Regimental leaders to ensure there is not a conflicting event, such as a prominent member of the Regiment getting married. The concept of consulting weaves its way throughout all levels of the reserve and this is due in part to the way of doing good business in the civilian workplace. Numerous examples exist of civilian businesses failing due to the lack of consultation between management and the workforce. The same problems occur in the military when there is a lack of similar consultation.

The number of courses needed to train the unit would depend on a number of factors that would be individually assessed. Factors include the level of qualifications already achieved, academic backgrounds and experience. A variety of in-house courses for Officers and Non Commissioned officers were conducted for the Elgin Regiment. The level of courses highlights the need for a competent training staff from the beginning. The cost in time and manpower is great and it involves a large time commitment from all the participants. Due to such a commitment, it is advisable that

consultation is necessary prior to undertaking such a program with the ramifications discussed, understood and accepted by all who are involved.



With personnel issues in hand and training now well under way the next step is to ensure that the resources and equipment are procured. A trained Regiment needs the equipment and resources to fulfill its mission. Resources and equipment must be procured or redistributed from within the existing units in a timely manner. The entire issue of re-equipping must be controlled at the highest levels to ensure that units that are losing equipment do so quickly so that the necessary inspections and maintenance can be carried out expeditiously, lest the momentum of re-rolling be lost. The manner in which equipment is procured when re-rolling is as varied as the imagination. The methods include transferring equipment from other units, issue from war stocks and locally purchased items. The importance of remaining flexible and patient while the unit gets the new equipment cannot be overemphasized.

The re-equipping of The Elgins took just over two years. Money was provided from a number of sources: National Defence Headquarters, the Area Headquarters, and the Brigade Headquarters. Continuous liaison with the various procurement staffs was necessary as well as several educational seminars on purchasing procedures. Such items as tools, vehicles and bridging resources were assigned to 31 CER (The Elgins) and shipped to the Regiment. Other materiel used in retraining was purchased on the local economy through the Area Support Unit (ASU) and was mostly lumber for bridge construction and power tool training.

The influx of new equipment and materiel necessitated the construction of a Sprung<sup>18</sup> shelter. The shelter was installed by the members of the Regiment. The Sprung shelter construction exercise served the dual function of providing the extra accommodation required, and it gave the soldiers an opportunity to learn and practice new skills. Throughout the procurement process, particular attention was paid to the budget, as a large portion of the unit viability assessment is attributable to how well the money is managed. The budget was placed under direct control of the Regimental Deputy Commanding Officer with assistance from the Chief Clerk and Finance Clerk. Attention to the budget assured that all monetary requirements were fulfilled and the Regiment was on a stable base for the viability assessment.



The Chief of the Land Staff has given the concept of operations for integrating the Reserve Force with the Regular Force. Members of both forces will have little experience on which to draw to successfully complete the tasks, however the lessons learned when re-rolling the Elgins will assist. The overriding, or master, principle is that the members of the unit must accept the restructuring process or the soldiers will leave and there will be nothing left to re-role. Regimental Honouraries must be utilized to the fullest extent possible and realized for the power that most of them hold. Harnessing the power of the Honouraries to accept re-rolling will be instrumental in the successful outcome of the initiative.

A training team of the best people, highly motivated, and flexible of mind are needed when selection is made for a posting to the Reserve. Providing anything less than the best, particularly when restructuring, is a disservice to both the Reserves and the Regular Force. To ensure that the best personnel are recruited into the unit, the recruiting function must be treated with a degree of importance, and, as such, must be given the proper resources to be successful. To accomplish the myriad of very specific and original

training requirements, an open mind to the method of training delivery will be invaluable. Finally the resources and equipment must be made available to the unit to procure necessary equipment that is unavailable through the supply system.

Restructuring reserve units can be successful and rewarding. The basic tenets of consultation, recruiting, training and equipping will give a high probability of success in the future restructuring of reserve units.

## ENDNOTES

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Paul Mooney Building effective, sustainable Army Reserves.  
[http:// www.army.dnd.ca/LFRR/LFRRSitreps/Sitrep3/](http://www.army.dnd.ca/LFRR/LFRRSitreps/Sitrep3/)
- <sup>2</sup> Honouraries are appointed by the Forces on recommendations from units to assist in ways that range from monetary to influential.
- <sup>3</sup> Report of The Parliamentary Committee on Change.  
[http://www.dnd.ca/menu/press/Reports/monitor\\_com/eng/reserv\\_e.htm](http://www.dnd.ca/menu/press/Reports/monitor_com/eng/reserv_e.htm)
- <sup>4</sup> A test evaluating the operational and administrative functionality of a Unit.
- <sup>5</sup> The Reserve report card was leaked to the National newspapers naming the units that had failed the evaluation. There was an enormous uproar from the units that had failed and the CLS quickly quashed the findings.
- <sup>6</sup> The Fraser Report. [http://www.dnd.ca/menu/press/Reports/Fraser/english/origins\\_e.htm](http://www.dnd.ca/menu/press/Reports/Fraser/english/origins_e.htm)
- <sup>7</sup> The Fraser Report.  
[http://www.dnd.ca/menu/press/Reports/Fraser/english/recommendation\\_e.htm](http://www.dnd.ca/menu/press/Reports/Fraser/english/recommendation_e.htm)
- <sup>8</sup> There are usually 2-4 Squadrons in a Regiment and the downgrading would see a significant loss of esteem and equipment.
- <sup>9</sup> The Regimental Senate is composed of the Regiment's previous Commanding Officers and wields considerable influence in matters affecting the Regiment.
- <sup>10</sup> Army Reserve D-net. [http://www.armee.mdn.ca/reserves/Honouraries/Honouraries\\_e.htm](http://www.armee.mdn.ca/reserves/Honouraries/Honouraries_e.htm)
- <sup>11</sup> LCol Douglas McCandless, personal interview, 10 Jan. 2001.
- <sup>12</sup> LCol Douglas McCandless, personal interview, 10 Jan. 2001.
- <sup>13</sup> Interview LCol Nicholson, Commanding Officer 31 CER (The Elgins), 4 December 2000.
- <sup>14</sup> Orbat-Order of Battle.
- <sup>15</sup> Thinking innovatively and not dogmatically.
- <sup>16</sup> Interview LCol Nicholson, Commanding Officer 31 CER (The Elgins), 4 December 2000.
- <sup>17</sup> Interview LCol Nicholson, Commanding Officer 31 CER (The Elgins), 4 December 2000.
- <sup>18</sup> Sprung is the company name of a fabric structure that can be quickly assembled and is approx 100ftx50ft.