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MASTER OF DEFENCE STUDIES RESEARCH PROJECT

**Retention of Canadian Army Senior NCOs:
Will the Glue That Holds the Army Together “Stick It Out?”**

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Abstract

The Canadian Forces (CF) is currently engaged in a challenging conflict thousands of miles away. The fight in Afghanistan pre-occupies the minds of most military planners, making it the military operation that will define the current generation of Canadian soldiers. At the same time, the CF is working towards an expansion of its strength by 25 percent; and this during a period when its training establishments and the ability to produce qualified soldiers is at its lowest state since World War II.

In order to succeed in these endeavours, it will be necessary to retain certain people with the experience and know-how to move forward. This is because the CF is about to face a human resources challenge of unprecedented proportions. The entire CF population is stressed by demographic skews that are the result of the poorly managed HR policies of the past. The confluence of operational tempo, personnel shortages, and force expansion may produce a “perfect storm” of circumstances that may undermine the success of entire Canadian defence mission. In view of this, the retention of key personnel is crucial.

This paper argues that those combat soldiers of the senior NCO rank who are nearing twenty years of service are a crucial cadre of experienced personnel upon which to build the future. It investigates the need to retain these soldiers and then moves on to discuss current retention strategies as they apply to this group. As the paper concludes, the argument will be made that the new retention policies that have been introduced are very well designed. Nevertheless, the strategy will only be successful if the CF continues to employ these soldiers in a way that values their worth. If the CF lapses into the methods of the past, the glue that holds the Army together will not “stick it out.”

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1.0 Introduction

During the post-Cold War years, the Department of National Defence (DND) struggled with a demand from its citizens to reduce defence expenditures. This resulted in a drop in defence spending from \$14 billion in 1988 to less than \$10 billion in 1998.¹ These lean years forced the leaders of the Canadian military establishment to find new ways to maintain a multi-purpose combat capability while still producing the requisite budgetary savings. In order to affect these fiscal reductions, in 1994 the Canadian Forces (CF) introduced a personnel reduction strategy known as the Force Reduction Programme (FRP), which led to reductions in personnel from pre-FRP strength of nearly 90,000, to a post-reduction strength of less than 60,000.² While largely successful in its short term goal of decreasing force size and departmental operating costs, the FRP was to have a lasting effect that has continued to haunt departmental Human Resource (HR) planners.

One of the lasting legacies of the FRP is an immense shortage of qualified personnel with the appropriate years of service to be able to replace those experienced CF members who will soon be eligible to retire. While this problem affects all the services, the fact that the Army is currently heavily engaged in Afghanistan suggests that this service may be the most vulnerable to shortages of experience in certain key roles. This paper will analyse the scale of the demographic problem facing a vital portion of the

¹ Bill Robinson and Peter Ibbot, *Canadian Military Spending: How does the Current level Compare with Historical Levels?... to Allied Spending?... To potential Threats?* (Project Ploughshares, March, 2003), 6. [Working paper on-line]; available from <http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/WorkingPapers/wp031.pdf>; Internet: accessed 19 February 19, 2007.

² Department of National Defence, *Audit of the Force Reduction Programme*, (Ottawa: DND CRS 7055-29 (DGA), January, 1997), 1. [Report on-line]; available from http://www.forces.gc.ca/crs/pdfs/frp_e.pdf; Internet; accessed 12 January, 2007.

Canadian Army population; the combat arms senior NCO corps.³ The paper will investigate the reasons why these NCOs must be retained and then discuss why the demographic situation forces the CF to be focused on retaining these key leaders. The paper will subsequently discuss CF retention methodologies, strategies and policies, and then evaluate these systems with a view to drawing conclusions about whether the senior NCOs of the Army will be retained or not. Some general conclusions will be drawn regarding the efficacy of the CF retention strategy as it applies to the general CF population.

The paper will open by providing background information that describes the Human Resource (HR) policies that were in place over the course of the last 20 years. This will set the context for the retention challenges that now face the CF. Next, the paper will discuss the factors that make combat arms senior NCOs so crucial to the success of the Army. The focus of the essay over the next few chapters is designed to illustrate that a retention based HR strategy is the only method that will make sense for the next few years. In order to accomplish this goal, the essay will illustrate the scale of the demographic problem facing the senior NCO Corps.

After revealing that retention is the key HR strategy for the CF, the essay will shift focus to a discussion of current CF retention strategies and whether these strategies will

³ Department of National Defence, "QR&O 1.02: Definitions," in *Queens Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Forces*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, January 2006), (n.p.). Note: CF Non-Commissioned Members (NCMs) are defined by this order as "any person, other than an officer, who is enrolled in, or who pursuant to law is attached or seconded otherwise than as an officer to, the Canadian Forces." A Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) is "a member holding the rank of sergeant or corporal." For the purposes of this essay, the author will use the term "senior NCO" to denote all those army NCMs who hold the ranks of Sergeant, Warrant Officer, Master Warrant Officer, and Chief Warrant Officer. Further note: *Combat arms* soldiers are soldiers who fill front-line combat roles. These soldiers are recognized in Canada as being from the combat engineer, infantry, armoured, and artillery trades. Soldiers from other trades (resource management, signals, logistics, medical, etc) are *support soldiers*.

succeed. Chapter 4 will review the main reasons for Army senior NCO attrition, while Chapter 5 discusses the current CF retention model and how this model was developed into an overall retention strategy. This strategy and the resultant policies will be evaluated in Chapter 6, so that the essay can draw its final conclusion regarding the degree of success of senior NCO retention. As the final conclusions develop, some ancillary deductions regarding CF retention policies will also be made.

1.1 Background

For the CF, the end of the Cold War meant personnel reductions to meet a lower perceived level of threat. However, the reality was that the Canadian Army was employed overseas more often than ever and in increasingly hazardous and demanding missions. Deployments to the Former Yugoslavia, Somalia, East Timor, Haiti and Afghanistan have proved to be both a materiel and personnel challenge for an armed force that has shrunk more in recent years than at any time since the end of World War II. The increased number of international missions placed a great strain on the frontline soldier, who has stoically shouldered the burden of these hazardous missions despite funding shortfalls, personnel reductions, and public apathy.⁴

Most members of the army were caught in the middle of these high paced deployments and radical reductions. Increased deployments and heavier workloads in Canada caused stress levels to increase amongst the rank and file. Despite this high operational tempo, the CF leadership was still struggling to make ends meet as the

⁴ Government of Canada, *Moving Forward: A Strategic Plan for Quality of Life Improvements in the Canadian Forces*, (Ottawa: Standing Committee on National Defence and Veteran's Affairs, October, 1998), (n.p.) [report on-line]; available from; <http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/Content/HOC/committee/361/ndva/reports/rp1031525/ndvarp03/09-chap1-e.htm>; Internet; accessed 22 December, 2006.

government continued to reduce resources. Army units were sent to operational areas with inadequate collective training.⁵ Soldiers had their pay frozen for several years, forcing some junior ranks to go to food banks in order to feed their families.⁶ Incentive pay raises were also frozen for three years, further reducing morale and causing an increasing disparity between military pay and increases in the cost of living.⁷ Morale was dropping and stress was increasing for all members of the CF.

Among the most strained members of the Forces were the combat engineer, infantry, armoured, and artillery soldiers of the Army. These soldiers became disillusioned and demoralized by the actions of the government, who seemed to wish the Army would produce miracles on the one hand, while reducing defence spending and troop levels on the other. Some of the many deployments that the Forces took part in were successful, as the accomplishments in the Former Yugoslavia and East Timor will attest. On the other hand, the Army experienced mixed success in other ventures. One misstep included a near catastrophe in the Congo; a mission that the troops called the “bungle in the jungle.”⁸ Other disastrous examples included the disgraceful murder of a Somali teenager during Op Deliverance and the leadership mishandling of operational stress injuries in the wake of the Army’s deployment to Croatia. All these events,

⁵ Joseph R. Nunez, “Canada’s Global Role: A Strategic Assessment of its Military Power,” *Parameters* (Autumn 2004): 82-83 [article on-line]; available from <https://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/04autumn/nunez.htm> ; Internet; accessed 12 December, 2006;.

⁶ Government of Canada, *Moving Forward:...*, (n.p)

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Jack L. Granatstein, *Who Killed the Canadian Military*, (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, Limited, 2004), 169.

coupled with the lack of support from politicians and the public, caused morale to plummet amongst the army rank and file.⁹

Among the most affected during this period were the up and coming NCOs of the Canadian Army. These nascent leaders saw more wartime soldiering during this period than any of their predecessors since the Korean War.¹⁰ Many of these people are now senior NCOs working at the rank of Sergeant and Warrant Officer. Perhaps, after having suffered under years of government neglect, they have become cynical and disillusioned with the military. They may choose to leave the forces, taking their experience with them as they seek to establish themselves in occupations that are less risky and more stable. But given their experience, these NCOs are a critical resource that will need to be managed carefully if the Army is to succeed in its efforts to rebuild while still continuing operations. The Canadian Forces will need these leaders to train the new members of the now expanding CF; a military that will increase its ranks by 13,000 regular force members during the coming years. Many of these new entrants will be new recruits for the Army.¹¹ Quite frankly, the CF cannot afford to let these NCOs leave.

This need to retain experience is essential in view of the fact that the Army is in the middle of an expansion programme while also engaged in war-fighting operations in Afghanistan. While these activities are underway, the Army is also in the middle of a

⁹ Carol Off, *The Ghosts of the Medak Pocket*, (Canada: Random House of Canada Limited, 2004), 233-274. see also Department of National Defence, *Croatia Board of Inquiry: Executive Summary*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2002), (n.p.) [summary on-line]; available from http://www.forces.gc.ca/boi/engraph/summary_e.asp; Internet; accessed 12 January, 2007.

¹⁰ Department of National Defence, "Speaking Notes for General Maurice Baril Chief of the Defence Staff at the Canadian Club of Ottawa," http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=456; Internet; accessed 14 April, 2007.

¹¹ Gordon J. O'Connor, "Message from the Defence Minister," (n.p.) [Transcript on-line]; available from http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Reports/budget06/message_e.asp; Internet; accessed 15 February, 2007.

major transformation effort, with new equipment coming on-line and new doctrine being written. These activities require expertise and careful leadership from a corps of experienced people. This makes the retention of experienced personnel crucial. This is especially true in the senior NCO ranks because, as will be demonstrated later in this paper, there is very little inherent capacity to replace these people from within the ranks of the CF.

2.0 Why Retain Army Senior NCOs

Canada has a long history of being unprepared for the next war. Prior to the two world wars, Canada was woefully unready for the challenge that followed. But our outstanding success during these two conflagrations seems to suggest that large scale peacetime armies and pre-war preparations are both wasteful and unnecessary. Perhaps the money spent maintaining a standing military force, with well trained personnel, is not something that Canada should waste its money on. This is an age old argument that has been part of the Canadian political dialogue since confederation. It should not be a surprise to anyone that certain factions of the Canadian public seemed to want to go down this road in the 1990s.

Nevertheless, the Canadian government has decided to maintain a standing military of modest size and expense. Canada's military, though small and only moderately equipped, is nonetheless seen as being extremely well trained and professional. All this is due to the hard working professionals of the military, and army senior NCOs represent some of the very best that Canada has to offer. This chapter will explain why it is so important to retain these individuals if we are to remain successful in the years to come.

2.1 The Good NCO, an Irreplaceable Asset

Civilian HR specialists use a factor of 1.5 to 1.75 of an employee's salary to deduce the cost of employee attrition.¹² The cost of losing a senior NCO is much higher since the investment made in training that person is much more long term. It takes several years and over \$600,000 to produce a senior NCO.¹³ The Sergeants and Warrant Officers of today have been preparing for their rank through a long process of formal training and on the job experience: a professional developmental programme that has taken 10 or more years to complete. To illustrate the investment made, it is valuable to discuss the ideal soldier who becomes qualified in the minimum time possible. A typical soldier will join the armed forces and complete recruit training with peers from across the occupational spectrum. After recruit training, the soldier will attend Battle School, a basic course that prepares the soldier for his trade. A large amount of attrition occurs during basic and battle school training and upwards of 72% of a given pool of recruits will be lost to attrition during this first year of service.¹⁴ Upon graduation, a soldier will join a unit for his or her first engagement, a Basic Engagement (BE), which lasts three years. During

¹² Charles R. Greer, *Strategic Human Resource Management: A General Managerial Approach*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc: 2001), 14.

¹³ Captain Kathleen Currie, "Retention", in *HR2020 Internal Assessment*, (Ottawa: ADM HR Military D Strat HR Project Report 01/2003, December, 2003), 32. Note: This report does not include a breakdown of costs incurred to train NCOs, leaving some question as to what this figure represents. For example, does this cost also include the soldier's salary? From another unrelated report it can be concluded that it does not. See also: A. Zegers, *Retention Bonus Costing Analysis*, (Ottawa: Directorate of Strategic Human Resources Research Note 2003/06, September 2003), A-2. According to this report, basic training costs alone are as follows: infantry (\$313K), armoured crewman (\$485K), Field Artilleryman (\$375K), A/D Artilleryman (\$258K), and Combat Engineer (\$542K). Regardless of the breakdown of costs, attrition is an expensive problem that should be reduced to as low a figure as possible.

¹⁴ Government of Canada, *Auditor General's Report – April 2002, Chapter 5: Report on Recruitment and Retention in the Canadian Forces*, (Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General, 2002) 5. [Report on-line]; available from <http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/reports.nsf/html/0205ce.html>; Internet; accessed 2 December 2006.

this BE the soldier will learn a trade and become a proficient member of the unit. This occurs through exercises, collective and individual training, and actual operational deployments. At the end of the three year BE, a soldier can re-enlist for another three year engagement or leave the Forces. Most soldiers leave at this point in their career after having realized that the Army is not the future they desire.¹⁵ Others will seek an occupational transfer to another trade, so that they can learn a more marketable technical skill like aircraft technician or information technology specialist.

After a second BE of three years of service, a soldier will normally be offered an Intermediate Engagement (IE) that will allow 20 years of service. Most will receive a contract offer, and statistics show that at this point in their careers the vast majority of soldiers will remain in the Army.¹⁶ The soldier is now a career Non-Commissioned Member (NCM) who will compete to advance through the ranks. At 20 years of service, an NCM will make another decision to stay with the military or seek a second career. At 20 years of service, a soldier is eligible for an immediate pension annuity and statistics show that many leave the forces when this career decision point is reached. This is because the individual will be able to make assumptions as to how far they could progress in their military career, and then make a decision if it is worthwhile to remain in the service or leave. The amount of people who leave the forces reaches a peak at 20

¹⁵ Government of Canada, *Auditor General's Report – May 2006...*, 58. Note: The military saw 13,500 applications in 2005/06. Only 4,750 actually made it into the training process. Historical attrition rates in the first year of service shows an average at greater than 10%.

¹⁶ G. E. Woodill and P. R. S. Bender, *Assessing Organizational Wellness in the Canadian Forces: A Presentation to the 2003 CDS Issues Seminar*, (Ottawa: NDHQ DOR Research Note, September 2003), 4-5.

Table 2-1 NCM Promotion Timelines

<i>Promotion to Rank</i>	<i>Time in Rank (Yrs)</i>	<i>Accelerated Promotion (Yrs)</i>	<i>Prerequisites¹⁷</i>	<i>In-Residence Training (Weeks)</i>
Private	N/A	N/A	Must complete qualification training	
Corporal	4	3	Commanding Officer's Authority	
Master Corporal	2	1	Junior Leaders Course (JLC) Completed Note: Soon to be renamed the Primary Leadership Qualification (PQ) Course	12
Sergeant	2	1	Competitive Merit Boards	
Warrant Officer	3	2	Intermediate Qualification Course Completed Competitive Merit Boards	12
Master Warrant Officer	3	2	Advanced Qualification Course Completed Competitive Merit Boards	13
Chief Warrant Officer	2	Not Permitted	Chief Warrant Officer Course Completed Competitive Merit Board	13

Source: Canadian Forces Administrative Order 49-4¹⁸

¹⁷ Department of National Defence, "NCM Professional Development," http://www.cda.forces.gc.ca/dpd/engraph/services/ncmpd_e.asp; Internet; accessed 12 February, 2007.

¹⁸ Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Administrative Order (CFAO) 49-4 *Career Policy Non-Commissioned Members Regular Force*... (n.p.).

years of service; it remains the largest attrition gate for enlisted personnel save the first BE expiry gate at three years of service.¹⁹

If an NCO remains in the service beyond the 20 year gate and has demonstrated high potential to advance, he or she will be in a position to compete for promotion to the highest NCO ranks. Table 2-1 shows the minimum time for a soldier to be promoted from one rank to the next. One column denotes the minimum regular time in rank needed to enter the promotion zones and the second denotes an accelerated promotion schedule. The former is the minimum normal time that is required for a soldier to become proficient in that rank and then be eligible for promotion. The latter is reserved for the truly exceptional people and is rarely used.

Table 2-1 indicates that the minimum normal time to reach the rank of Sergeant is eight years, although it is theoretically possible to reach that rank in five years through successive accelerated promotions. To reach the pinnacle rank of Chief Warrant Officer, a soldier would have 16 years of service if promoted to each of the intermediate ranks in the minimum time, and if advanced to the top rank through successive accelerated promotions he or she would have 11 years of service. In reality, the vast majority of soldiers are promoted much later than the table suggests. This is partly because there has to be a vacant position available for them to occupy.²⁰ In addition, most soldiers need more time than the minimum to gain the requisite experience and training and it is

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-9.

²⁰ Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Administrative Order (CFAO) 49-4 *Career Policy Non-Commissioned Members Regular Force*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, May, 1991), (n.p.) [Administrative Order on-line]; Available from http://www.admfincs.forces.gc.ca/admfincs/subjects/cfao/049-04_e.asp; Internet; accessed 12 January, 2007.

exceedingly rare that a soldier is considered for accelerated promotions. Those that are so considered would probably be promoted in this fashion only once during their careers. While this assumption is based on the author's experience, the demographic plot obtained from the 2004-05 HR Report indeed confirms that most senior NCOs many much more years of service and time in rank than the minimum. It is true that Sergeants are first viewed in the NCM population with six years of service, but the majority of that rank population falls in the 13 to 20 years of service range. Chief Warrant Officers are first evident within the CF demographic profile when they have 23 years of service, with the majority of the population falling in the 27-32 years of service band.²¹

The main drivers for promotion are trade competence and experience, with the secondary prerequisite being the completion of national formal leadership training courses, which are conducted by the Canadian Defence Academy. As a prerequisite for promotion, each trade has individual training milestones at each rank level that a member must complete in order to be assessed as being ready for promotion. Called Qualification Levels (QLs), this training is completed through formal coursing and on-the-job experience. Each successive level of promotion also requires leadership training and each level requires competitive placement for a limited number of course slots. These courses have distance learning components and residential training requirements, and must be completed for a member to reach substantive rank. In order to be allowed to attend these courses, a soldier must compete with peers and be selected for attendance. There are no guarantees that the course will be offered as soon as the member is ready for this training and this causes further delays from the ideal promotion timeline. Once selected for this

²¹Department of National Defence, *Annual Report on Regular Force Personnel...*, 6.

leadership training, the member and the military must invest a significant amount of time and effort into the training. The distance learning and residential training requirements take the member away from the unit for weeks at a time.²² In summary, the training given to senior NCOs represent a high level of institutional effort. To squander this investment is not wise, especially if there is a lack of qualified replacements. This factor will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

2.2 Retain Army Senior NCOs for the Enhancement of Military Effectiveness

Although significant investments are made to train a senior NCO to the level needed to perform his duties, equally important to the retention argument is the need to keep their experience in order to maintain the effectiveness of the Canadian Forces. As postulated earlier, it is entirely possible that the Army could promote less qualified personnel to higher ranks if a large number of senior NCOs were to leave the Forces voluntarily. While it is certainly possible that the CF could pursue such a policy, to many in the Forces such a large scale replacement of retiring Army senior NCOs would cause a serious degradation in military effectiveness. A possible reduction of Army readiness could result, with a concurrent degradation in the ability of the military to meet the challenges of force expansion. Most importantly, the Army would be highly challenged with its current mission in Afghanistan.

From the perspective of lost experience, it is necessary to review why they represent an asset that is important to retain. It must be remembered that many of these NCOs joined the large Cold War military, and have endured years of downsizing and cut-

²² See Table 2-1 for a breakdown of residential leadership training requirements for junior, intermediate and senior NCOs.

backs. Despite these problems, they have subsequently excelled to attain high rank in their chosen profession. They represent some of the only soldiers who truly understand the new security environment, having served in many of the worst trouble spots in the world. They have learned from their experiences of past operations, and they have excelled where promotions were few and far between in the downsized Army. Simply put, these are some of the very few remaining people who have risen to the top, and they have accomplished this feat during an era that General Hillier refers to as the “decade of darkness.”²³

These senior NCOs are ideally suited to meet the challenges of the coming expansion years. The CF has identified that values and ethos are the core elements of NCM professionalism.²⁴ These fundamentals cannot be taught by rote learning alone. Mentorship and guidance are crucial to values based learning; a principle that was reemphasized in the CF strategic guidance for the development of NCM professional training.²⁵ The experienced NCOs of today will provide that guidance to up and coming replacement NCOs. In an article for the *Canadian Military Journal*, Master Warrant Officer Stephen Smith spoke eloquently of the need for NCOs to be engaged in the training of junior personnel. The key feature of his thesis is that experience has been the

²³ Angus Reid Global Monitor, “Canadians Think Hillier Should Speak His Mind,” <http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/index.cfm/fuseaction/viewItem/itemID/14860>; Internet; accessed 15 March 2007.

²⁴ Department of National Defence, *The Canadian Forces Non-Commissioned Member in the 21st Century: Detailed Analysis and Strategy For Launching Implementation* (NCM Corps 2020), (Ottawa: Vice Chief of Defence Staff, 2002), I-2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, I-28.

best teacher and this gives the NCO of today a deep level of knowledge, command skill, and managerial acumen.²⁶ However, soldiering skills are just one part of a bigger picture.

Although technical skill is a fundamental part of soldiering, the greatest value that serving senior NCOs bring to the organization is their experience as mentors. During a period of expansion, the lessons of the military ethos are often overlooked for reasons of expediency. Soldiers learn what the military ethos is during basic and advanced training. However, the real internalization of what it means to be a soldier is passed on through a mentorship relationship with senior role models. This takes time and cannot happen through institutionalized learning.

History provides an interesting study of what could happen to an army when it allows its experienced NCO corps to disappear. In the 1970s, the US Army senior NCO corps was decimated by a number of different factors including the war in Vietnam, and had to resort to promoting unqualified personnel to fill this role. New senior NCOs were taught how to do their jobs in training institutions and became “qualified” upon graduation. Called “shake and bakes” by the troops, they were technically proficient but lacked the leadership experience that was necessary to work with soldiers. As a result, they were generally not respected by the rank and file and thus lacked the credibility to be able to mentor recruits in the values associated with being in the military. The US Army suffered devastating morale and discipline breakdowns and the institution very nearly broke down as a result.²⁷ In the Canadian Army context, Smith’s article reiterates the

²⁶ Master Warrant Officer Stephen R. Smith, “Reform and the Non-Commissioned Officer,” *The Canadian Military Journal* Vol. 6, No. 2 (Summer, 2005): 34, 36.

²⁷ Larry H. Ingraham, “Fear and Loathing in the Barracks – And the Heart of Leadership,” *Parameters* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, December 1988), 75-80.

important mentorship role that senior NCOs have in the socialization of junior personnel.²⁸ This makes the retention of their experience crucial to the continuance of CF value based training. After all, role models are the best method of imparting these kinds of lessons.²⁹

Clearly, other NCMs stand to gain much from the good example of a senior NCO, but the value of their experience does not stop at the NCM level. Junior officers also stand to gain much from the sage council of an experienced senior NCO. A Sergeant or Warrant Officer can lend a lot of wisdom to a junior officer. They can add their intuition and experience to help the officer to see the pitfalls and potential problems inherent in a particular situation.³⁰ This kind of assistance is a force multiplier that could save lives and resources. A young junior officer confirmed this need during an exit survey:

I did school for eight years and now I'm in my ninth year in the CF. I'm operational and I have no clue what people tell me. My two sergeants guide me all the time. If they leave, I'm screwed.³¹

The timely advice given by a senior NCO to a young junior officer could lessen the chance of battlefield casualties, or prevent the worsening of an unresolved discipline problem that is affecting a troubled soldier in garrison. The loss of experience would be very hard to overcome.

²⁸ Smith, "Reform...", 36.

²⁹ Claude Hamel and Franklin Pinch, *Models of Military Service: Influences on Joining, Leaving and Staying in the Canadian Forces*, (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, July, 2000), 51. Note: This work confirms the importance of "mentorship" in the socialization of junior military members. Other academic works and numerous anecdotal references also make reference to this phenomenon.

³⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel Bernd Horn, "Timeless Strength: The Army's Senior NCO Corps", *The Canadian Military Journal*, (Kingston: Canadian Forces Defence Academy, Spring, 2002), 44.

³¹ Jason Dunn and Major Rob O. Morrow, *Should I Stay or Should I Go: Attrition Questionnaire Revision Project – Phase 1 Findings*, (Ottawa: Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation, November, 2002), 12.

Another aspect of the necessity to retain senior NCO experience comes from the new concept known as the “strategic corporal.”³² Inherent in most modern theatres of war is the state of ambiguity on the battlefield, where an NCO can make a decision that may have consequences at the strategic and political level.³³ Today’s senior NCO can rely on many experiences in order to help him make decisions; experience gained during challenging peacekeeping and peacemaking missions around the world. This kind of experience has made our NCOs some of the most intuitive and adaptable military members of any army in the world.³⁴ Arguably, our experienced senior NCOs have helped Canada to maintain its place in the world. They have used their initiative and skill to avoid tactical mistakes that could reduce the strategic national will; mistakes like the Somalia debacle that forced Canada’s withdrawal from the scene in disgrace despite some very good work that was done to save lives in that country. The Somalia Commission report says it best:

We can only hope that Somalia represents the nadir of the fortunes of the Canadian Forces. There seems to be little room to slide lower. One thing is certain, however: left uncorrected, the problems that surfaced in the desert in Somalia and in the boardrooms at National Defence Headquarters will continue to spawn military ignominy. The victim will be Canada and its international reputation.³⁵

³² General Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War" in *Marines Magazine*, (Washington, DC: January 1999), (n.p.) [Article on-line]; Available from http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/strategic_corporal.htm; Internet; accessed 14 January, 2007.

³³ Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-001 *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada*, (Kingston, ON: DND Canada, 2003), 64.

³⁴ Smith, “Reform and the Non-Commissioned Officer...”, 34.

³⁵ Government of Canada, *The Report of the Somalia Commission of Inquiry: Executive Summary*, (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997), (n.p.). [Report on-line]; Available from <http://www.dnd.ca/somalia/vol0/v0s1e.htm>; Internet; accessed 23 December, 2006.

In short, today's senior NCOs can certainly be replaced by a mass promotion of barely qualified replacements. However, it should be remembered that Somalia could have been avoided through the positive action of a determined Sergeant. It is easy to postulate that the Army would be poorer if the CF were to let poorly qualified replacements fill the ranks of the senior NCO corps.

3.0 The CF Demographic Challenge

A healthy demographic situation is crucial to the function of any organization. What this means for a military organization is that there is a properly managed split of the different age groups within the population profile so that replacements for older leaders who leave are readily available and trained to replace them. This must be done because there is no way to hire a combat leader off the street. A senior NCO combat soldier takes a decade or longer to produce through a process involving years of intensive training and experience. This chapter will discuss the demographic challenges that are facing the CF as a whole and the army senior NCO corps in particular.

3.1 The Cause of the Crisis: CF Human Resources Policy during the 1990s.

As revealed earlier in this paper, the CF reduced its ranks by approximately 30,000 members during the 1990s.³⁶ Nowhere was this drop in personnel felt more than in the Army, where the troop strength was reduced from 35,800 soldiers in 1990 to 20,900 in 2001.³⁷ This figure of nearly 21,000 troops still appears quite large, but it must

³⁶ Government of Canada, *Auditor General's Report – April 2002*..., 4.

³⁷ Conference of Defence Associations, *Caught in the Middle: An Assessment of the Operational Readiness of the Canadian Forces*, (Ottawa: CDA, 2001), 33.

be remembered that this number includes all Land Force personnel. In fact, the total number of actual *combat* troops amounted to only 9,700 in 2001.³⁸ As alluded to earlier, these reductions were a response to the drastic military budget cuts of the 1990s which forced the department to offer exit packages that enticed people to take early retirement. These buyout and early retirement packages were offered under the umbrella of the Force Reduction Plan (FRP), an initiative that was brought into force with little thought for the future.³⁹ In their haste to solve the budgetary imbalances of the time, the leadership of the CF decided that the buyout packages would be offered to anyone who wanted them. These broad brush offers, designed to show fairness to all members, caused the CF to mortgage its future without any consideration of the demographic profile of the force. In effect, this was a short term cost-cutting decision that was to have dire long term consequences.⁴⁰

In keeping with this drop in personnel was a concurrent reduction in recruitment. No longer interested in recruiting large numbers of personnel, the Canadian Forces sought further budgetary efficiencies by reducing most of the training and recruit establishments to skeleton status.⁴¹ This caused a slow down of recruiting output to the point where

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 27. Note: The term combat troop is not defined in the auditor general's report. It is assumed that this term is in consonance with the definition cited earlier in this paper. The statistics agree. According to the 2006 Personnel Status Report (quoted elsewhere), the number of CF combat troops as per this definition was 9,474 soldiers. This is nearly on par with the 2001 figure cited in the above text.

³⁹ Major Jeff Tasseron, "Military Manning and the Revolution in Social Affairs," *The Canadian Military Journal* Vol. 2, No. 3 (Autumn, 2001): 54.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Government of Canada, *Auditor General's Report - May 2006, Chapter 2: Report on Recruiting and Retention in the Canadian Forces*, 63. [Report on-line]; available from [http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/reports.nsf/html/20060502ce.html/\\$file/20060502ce.pdf](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/reports.nsf/html/20060502ce.html/$file/20060502ce.pdf); Internet; accessed 15 December, 2006.

attrition outstripped recruitment during the period from 1994-2001.⁴² To make matters worse, the few keen recruits that were actually hired were left waiting for courses for months, or even years, and simply quit the Forces in frustration.⁴³ The reductions in personnel under the FRP, coupled with reduced recruiting, have caused a situation that can be described as a *demographic hole*.

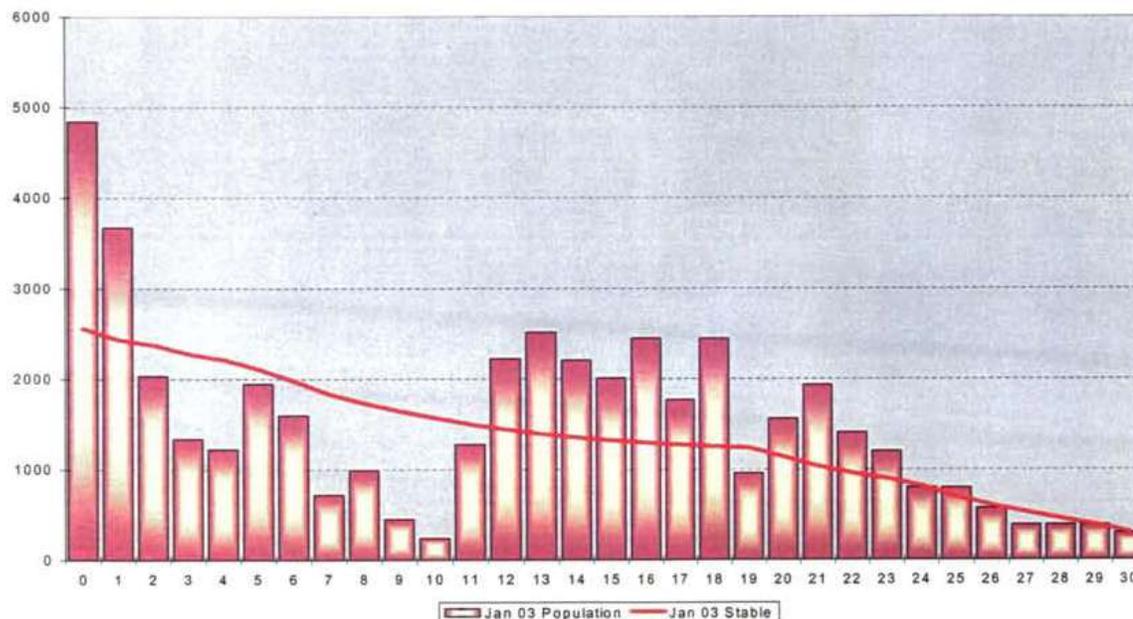


Figure 3-1 - CF NCM Demographics

Source: Woodill and Bender, *Assessing Organizational Wellness in the CF*, 7.

Figure 3-1 shows the CF NCM population in 2003.⁴⁴ The bar graphs represent the actual CF population, whereas the line is a stable representation of the demographic ideal. Note the difference between the ideal and the actual population figures in the six to ten years of service range. This gap between the actual and the desired population is the

⁴² Government of Canada, *Auditor General's Report – April 2002*..., 3.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ G. E. Woodill and P. R. S. Bender, *Assessing Organizational Wellness in the Canadian Forces: A Presentation to the 2003 CDS Issues Seminar*, (Ottawa: NDHQ DOR Research Note, September 2003), 7.

demographic hole. This is perhaps the most significant HR challenge that the CF will deal with over the next few years. This paper will now demonstrate that this problem is particularly dire for the Army and its NCM combat arms trades.

3.2 The Demographic Hole

The consequences of the demographic hole are that there are not enough replacements available to fill the gap should a large number of senior NCOs (or those of similar age and service who could be promoted to that level) decide to leave the Forces voluntarily. As seen in Figure 3-1, the demographic profile of the CF NCM population shows huge peaks and valleys, a very unhealthy state of affairs from a military HR perspective. More than 50% of the CF has 15 years of service or more and about 30% of the forces have less than six years of service.⁴⁵ Note the large numbers of personnel nearing twenty years of service, the point in ones career when a member can retire with a pension annuity. This is typically the point of highest attrition for career soldiers.⁴⁶ Of particular note are the low numbers of personnel in the 7-11 year range. These are the members that were hired during the recruiting doldrums of the mid-nineties and who will be expected to fill the shoes of these senior NCOs when they decide to retire. This gap of experienced personnel is the demographic hole and it is a problem that exists throughout the military manpower pool. The problem was reported in the 2005 report on military

⁴⁵ Government of Canada, *Auditor General's Report – April 2002...*, 54.

⁴⁶ I.A. Collin and P. R. S. Bender, *Assessment of the Potential Volume of Releases at the 20 Years of Service Point*, (Ottawa: DND Operational Research Division, November, 2002), 5.

human resources as a phenomenon that "...can lead to several HR issues in the areas of succession planning, sustainability, and operational capability."⁴⁷

3.3 The Demographics of the Army Senior NCO Corps

The discussion in the previous paragraph refers to the situation facing the CF on a macro level. It is now time to delve into the demographic situation specific to the senior NCO rank population within combat arms trades of the Army. An investigation of the situation facing these classifications shows a problem that is just as dire as that facing the entire CF. In a report to the International Military Testing Organization in 2002, the Canadian delegation reported that the enlisted combat trades of the Canadian Army are forecast to have double the normal attrition rates until 2011; a substantial problem that the authors deemed would make combat arms trades especially fragile during this period.⁴⁸

In the case of Combat Engineers the problem is worse than the average. To date, this classification has seen an incredible 166 releases during 2006-07 of which 35 soldiers were Sergeants and above (8.5% of the engineer senior NCO population).⁴⁹ The Combat Engineer Career Manager expressed grave concern about the health of his classification and stated that several experienced engineers continue to leave the Forces in droves.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Department of National Defence, *Annual Report on Regular Force Personnel: 2004-2005*, (Ottawa: ADM HR Military, December 2005), 5.

⁴⁸ Irene A. Colling and Paul Bender, *Assessment of the Potential Volume of Releases...*, 1-18.

⁴⁹ Warrant Officer JLD Lacasse, *Career Manager's Report: Known Releases 2006-07*, (NDHQ Ottawa, 5 February 2007), (n.p.). Note: Two additional Combat Engineers died during 2006 and will need to be replaced. One Chief Warrant Officer died of natural causes; the other senior NCO was a Sergeant who was killed in action in Afghanistan.

⁵⁰ Warrant Officer JLD Lacasse, *Career Manager's Report: Releases 2005-06*, (NDHQ Ottawa, 22 March 2006), (n.p.). Note: Career Manager's statements were drawn from the author's email request for information, email received 12 February, 2007.

The years 2004 and 2005 showed similar statistics. In 2005, the classification had 94 releases (15 were senior NCOs).⁵¹ In 2004, 89 engineers took a voluntary release of

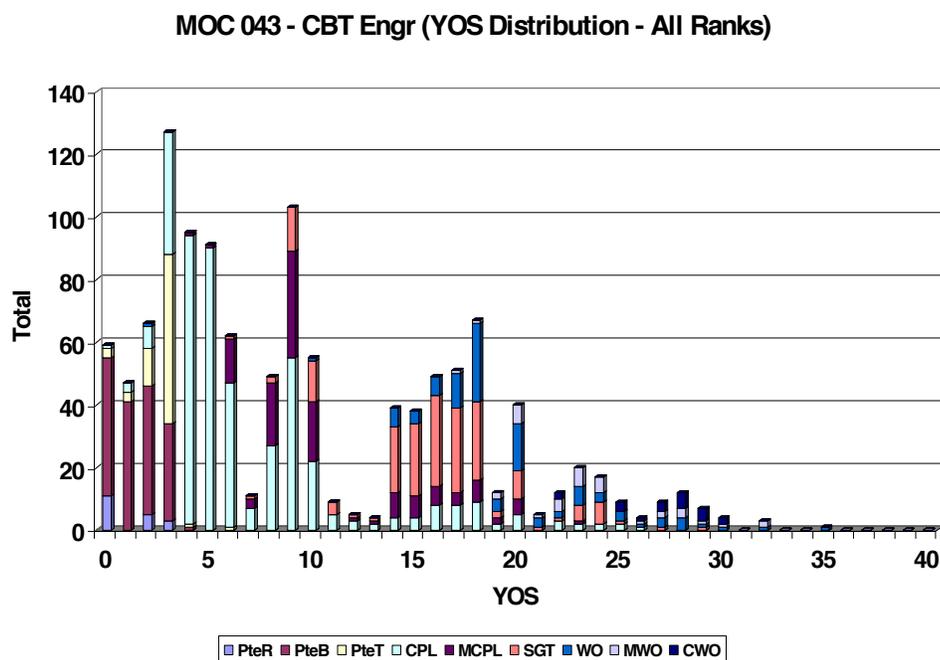


Figure 3-2 Combat Engineer Demographics
Source: Annual Military Occupation Report on Combat Engineers, (n.p)⁵²

which 25 were senior NCOs. These numbers appear small, but it must be remembered that this trade has an all-ranks total strength of only 1,355 soldiers, of which 415 are sergeants and above.⁵³ This kind of attrition is hard to manage when one considers the demographic hole referred to earlier in this chapter. Figure 3-2 shows that the

⁵¹ Warrant Officer JLD Lacasse, *Career Manager's Report: Releases 2004-05*, (NDHQ Ottawa, 04 March 2005), (n.p.).

⁵² Department of National Defence, *2005-06 Annual Military Occupation Report on Combat Engineers*, (Ottawa: D Strat HR, February 2005), (n.p.) [Report On-line]; Available from <http://armyonline.kingston.mil.ca/Common/DocInfo.asp?RecID=143000440052493>; Intranet; Accessed 22 October, 2006.

⁵³ Department of National Defence, *Projected Status Report*, (Ottawa: Director Military Employment Policy, October, 2006), (n.p.). [Report on-line]; Available from; Intranet; accessed 22 October, 2006.

demographic plot for this classification demonstrates the same peak and valley phenomenon that is seen for the entire force. Note in particular the very few NCOs with 11 to 13 years of service and the large numbers of Sergeants and above nearing retirement age (i.e. 20 years of service). From both the perspective of demographic balance and recent releases, the Combat Engineer classification is in serious difficulty.

As for the Infantryman classification, the situation does not appear as dire as it does for the Combat Engineers. However there are some serious areas of concern. The demographic bubble is as pronounced for infantryman as it is for any trade, with 33% of the population nearing the 20 years of service milestone.⁵⁴ According to an analyst at the Director of Military Employment Policy, infantry soldiers tend to have higher retention rates than other trades during the period after the normal 20 year retirement point.⁵⁵ That being said, only 6% of the trade's population are in the key age bracket that will move up to replace any senior NCOs who decide to leave, a situation that the analyst refers to as "worrisome."⁵⁶ See Figure 3-3 for a representation of the infantry demographic profile. The reader should again take note of the very few NCOs with 11 to 13 years of service.

⁵⁴ John G. Currie, *Mid Career Retention of Senior Infantry WO and NCM*, (NDHQ Ottawa: File 30000-2-8 (DMEP 4-2), Attrition/Retention Team Letter Report 2004-002, 14 June, 2004), 2.

⁵⁵ John G. Currie, *Mid Career Retention...*, 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

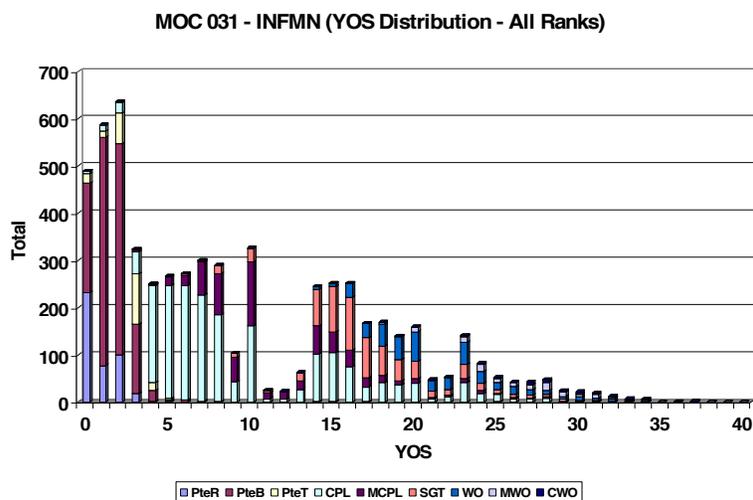


Figure 3-3 Infantryman Demographics
 Source: Annual Military Occupation Report on Infantrymen, (n.p.)⁵⁷

The armoured crewman Military Occupation Classification (MOC) is also shorthanded and suffers from similar demographic problems. This trade has an authorized strength of 1,588 soldiers, of which 394 are senior NCOs.⁵⁸ The MOC is currently under strength by 62 soldiers, with the senior NCO ranks representing 57 of these 62 soldiers (a shortage of 14.5%).⁵⁹ The trade has limited numbers of soldiers with the necessary experience to replace the senior NCOs that are nearing 20 years of service. Figure 3-4 is a representation of the armoured crewman demographic profile. Note in

⁵⁷ Department of National Defence, *2005-06 Annual Military Occupation Report on Infantryman*, (Ottawa: D Strat HR, February 2005), (n.p.) [Report On-line]; Available from <http://armyonline.kingston.mil.ca/Common/DocInfo.asp?RecID=143000440052453> Intranet; Accessed 22 October, 2006.

⁵⁸ Department of National Defence, *Projected Status Report...*, (n.p.).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

particular the minute numbers of soldiers with 11 to 13 years of service.

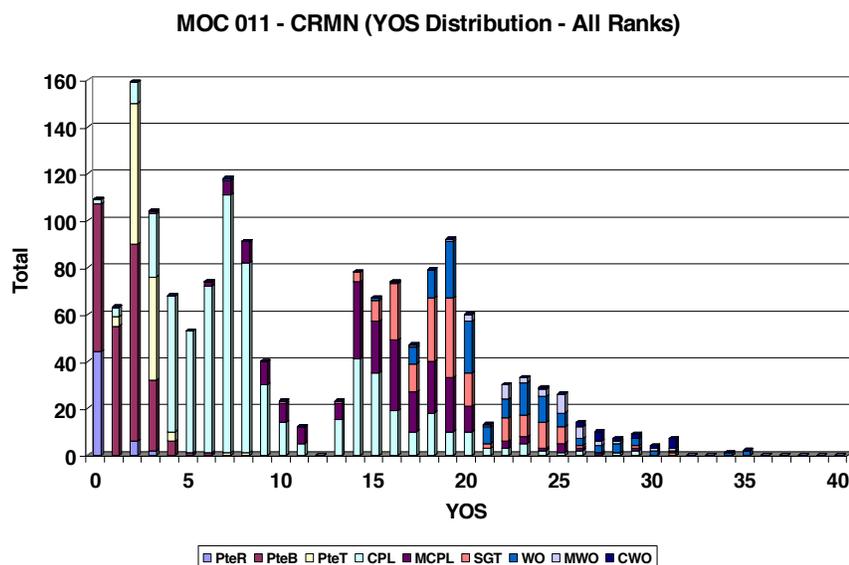


Figure 3-4 Armoured Crewman Demographics
Source: Annual Military Occupation Report on Armoured Crewman, (n.p)⁶⁰

As for the artillery classification, there is evidence that the demographic profile of this occupation is also fragile. The artillery trade is divided into two subsets; field artillery and air defence artillery. The air defence trade is quite small with an overall strength of 275 NCMs of which 85 are sergeants and above. While the air defence trade within this occupation is healthy, the field artilleryman occupation as a whole is 11.4% under-strength.⁶¹ Overall, the artillery occupation is shorthanded by 92 senior NCOs, with the majority of the shortage at the sergeant level.⁶² This represents a 22% shortage, and what

⁶⁰ Department of National Defence, *2005-06 Annual Military Occupation Report on Armoured Crewmen*, (Ottawa: D Strat HR, February 2005), (n.p.). [Report On-line]; Available from <http://armyonline.kingston.mil.ca/Common/DocInfo.asp?RecID=143000440052409>; Intranet; Accessed 22 October, 2006.

⁶¹ Department of National Defence, *Occupation Status Report*, (Ottawa: Director Military Employment Policy, October, 2006), (n.p.).

⁶² Department of National Defence, *Projected Status Report...*, (n.p.).

makes matters worse attrition is expected to double during fiscal year 2007/08.⁶³ The artillery classification is healthiest of all the combat arms trades but there is ample cause for concern. See Figures 3-5 and 3-6 for a representation of the air defence artillery and field artillery demographic profiles. It should be noted that while the scale of the problem is smaller for these two MOCs, dealing with the manpower problems of a smaller trade is sometimes a double edged sword. On the one hand there are fewer people that need to be replaced. On the other hand, there are also fewer qualified replacements. In effect, the senior NCO attrition problem is as acute for artillerymen as it is for the other combat arms trades. -

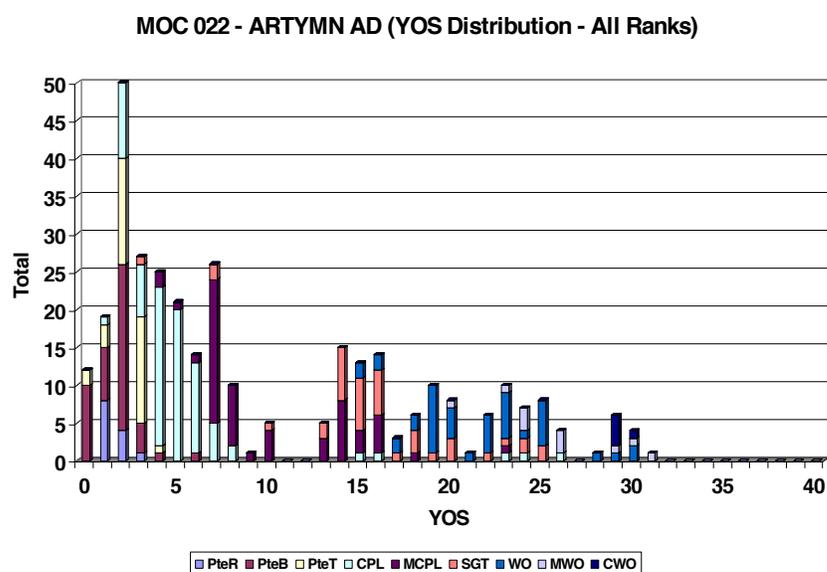


Figure 3-5 Air Defence Artilleryman Demographics
Source: Annual Military Occupation Report on Air Defence Artillerymen⁶⁴

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Department of National Defence, *2005-06 Annual Military Occupation Report on Air Defence Artillerymen*, (Ottawa: D Strat HR, February 2005), (n.p.) Report On-line; Available from <http://armyonline.kingston.mil.ca/Common/DocInfo.asp?RecID=143000440052449> Intranet; Accessed 22 October, 2006.

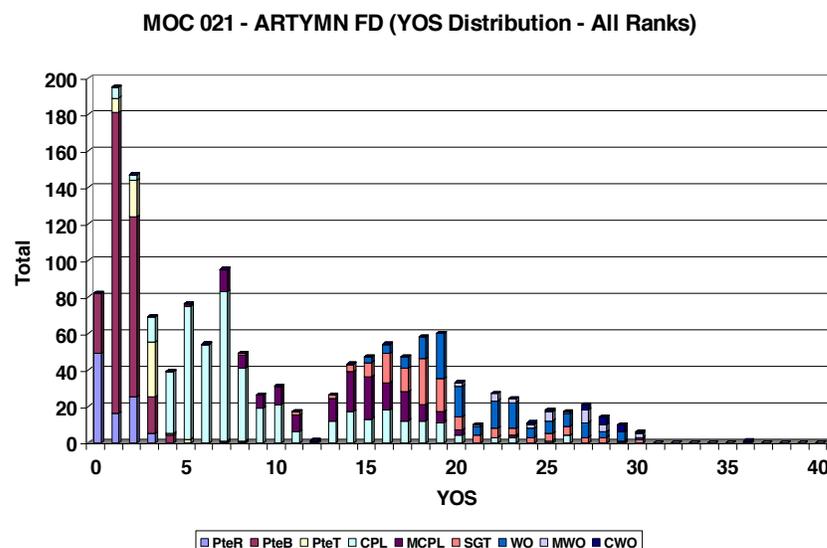


Figure 3-6 Field Artilleryman Demographics
Source Annual Military Occupation Report on Field Artillerymen, (n.p.)⁶⁵

The CF also intends to increase the strength of the Combat Arms trades. As discussed earlier in this paper, the government has recognized that the troop reductions of the 1990s cut too deep. Both the Conservative government of today and its Liberal predecessor have made significant moves to increase the number of combat soldiers in the army and HR planners within the department have made plans to follow through with this guidance. The increase in size of the NCO corps is forecast to be relatively modest in the next two years. Even so it is likely that the demographic situation will dictate that even these small increases in supervisory positions will outstrip senior NCO production capacity.

The following data illustrates the likely increases in combat arms NCO positions over the next two years. The infantryman trade will increase the size of its senior NCO

⁶⁵ Department of National Defence, *2005-06 Annual Military Occupation Report on Field Artillerymen*, (Ottawa: D Strat HR, February 2005), (n.p.) [Report On-line]; available from <http://armyonline.kingston.mil.ca/Common/DocInfo.asp?RecID=143000440052443>; Intranet; Accessed 22 October, 2006.

corps by 28 soldiers between now and 2009, a figure that represents a 2% increase in NCO force structure.⁶⁶ Combat Engineers will increase the numbers of senior NCOs by 10 soldiers (also a 2% increase), while armoured crewman will increase by 67 senior NCOs (a 14% increase).⁶⁷ While these numbers are not large when looked at in isolation, it must be remembered that all senior NCO ranks are already shorthanded and attrition is expected to increase in the next few years. Therefore, an increase in the numbers of NCOs to fill these positions will be impossible to achieve even if all senior NCOs remain in the Forces. All that can be done is to plan for the future once the demographic balance is regained after 2012. In summary, the four combat arms trades are facing a problem where there are not enough experienced soldiers available to replace the experienced senior NCOs who may leave during the next few years. When coupled with the conclusions of the previous chapter regarding the value added of an experienced senior NCO corps, the shortages of key age groups in the army NCO population has clearly established the a retention strategy is the way ahead for the CF.

⁶⁶ Department of National Defence, *Projected Status Report...*, (n.p.).

⁶⁷ Department of National Defence, *Projected Status Report...*, (n.p.).

4.0 The Causes of Senior NCO Attrition

As was concluded in the previous chapter, retention of senior NCO experience is a clear necessity for the CF. Before an evaluation of current retention efforts can take place, it is essential to analyze the reasons for senior NCO attrition. Not much has been written in the Canadian Forces about this subject. A thorough review of surveys and research papers will yield a bounty of research regarding the motivations of soldiers, sailors and airmen of all ranks who leave the military for greener pastures. As to specific research that explains why army senior NCOs should decide to stay or leave, there is virtually nothing available. However, the many research papers that cover all ranks and service profiles provide some food for thought. From this research it can be deduced that, in most cases, the stay/leave decision making process is influenced by the same factors regardless of the individual's rank or status. This chapter will investigate the general motivations for leaving the service so that a deduction can be made as to whether the retention programmes now in place will be effective.

Military members, like their civilian counterparts, will remain in or leave a job for various reasons. Their decision may be motivated by dissatisfaction, a negative feeling that can be influenced by several Quality of Life (QoL) factors. Often their decision to leave is made as a logical process of career decision making, whereby the soldier will weigh various factors and make a cost-benefit decision to stay or to go. What is equally important to understand is that the decision to leave the service is not always made with logical assessments.⁶⁸ These seemingly illogical career decisions are often the result of a loss of commitment, and are caused by an emotional reaction that reflects feelings of

⁶⁸ Hamel and Pinch, *Models of Military Service...*, 33, 37.

frustration about the organisation in which they serve. This chapter will first review some of the reasons why soldiers leave the Army. First, the paper will explore the most common reasons that soldiers give during exit surveys. The next section will explore the pace of deployments and workload as a source of dissatisfaction. Lastly, the chapter will discuss how leadership factors and the loss of soldier commitment have caused attrition within the senior NCO corps.

4.1 Pay and Family Instability and Senior NCO Attrition

A recent exit survey conducted by the CF asked people leaving the forces why they were departing. The top three responses were;

1. "I am taking advantage of my pension and potential civilian salary"
2. "I am going back to school"
3. "I want to increase my family stability by establishing roots in the community."⁶⁹

The second most popular choice, the intention to return to school, relates to younger soldiers of junior ranks. According to the survey, more than 80% of the people making this choice were soldiers who were less than 35 years of age and had less than nine years of service.⁷⁰ This data suggests that returning to academic life is not a great motivator for senior NCOs, who are older, long-service soldiers. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the large majority of the respondents (78%) noted that they were leaving the service in order to take advantage of their pension benefits, so that they could combine this benefit with their civilian salary and increase their earnings.⁷¹ Most of these

⁶⁹ F. Syed and Major R.O. Morrow, *Canadian Forces Recruiting and Retention Strategies: Discussion Paper for the NATO Working Group on Recruiting and Retention*, (Ottawa: Directorate of Strategic HR, 2004), 13.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

respondents would be long-service soldiers, and many Army senior NCOs can be assumed to also fall within this 78% bracket of CF leavers. Therefore, it appears that the majority of senior NCOs are leaving the Army for financial reasons, while another smaller portion will leave in order to provide stability for their families. Despite the indicators that show that soldiers leave the military for financial and stability reasons, other research shows that that the answer is not as simple as it seems.

It appears from the previous paragraph that senior NCOs are leaving the forces to enhance their financial well being and increase family stability. However, a recent QoL survey stated that military members were relatively split about the quality of military pay. Some 54% of respondents stated that military pay was inadequate, while 46% were either neutral or expressed some satisfaction.⁷² This does not suggest that there is an overwhelming level of discontent with military pay. Many soldiers also state that family stability is important to them, but most also indicate that the challenge they get from working in the Army is more important to them than family considerations.⁷³ Thus, it is clear that while money and a stable home life are important to a soldier, time at home and

⁷¹ *Ibid.* Note: To put this wage differential argument into perspective, a notional example can be used. For sake of argument, we will postulate that an infantry Sergeant leaves the military with 20 years of service. He is already established in Edmonton and owns a home. He then gets a job as an entry level truck driver in the Alberta oil patch (chances are good that he could actually get a better job). The Alberta government says that with current labour shortages, a new truck driver can make nearly \$50,000 a year. Combined with his pension benefits, the retired Sergeant will gross \$72,000 per annum, \$14,000 more a year than he is making with the military. See: Mike Byfield, "The Oil Patch Needs You if You've Got What it Takes," <http://www.nickles.com/marketplace/pdfs/takes-cr05.pdf>; Internet; accessed 15 April 2007.

⁷² Craig Dowden, *Quality of Life in the Canadian Forces*, (Ottawa: Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation, October, 2001), 37. [Research Paper on-line]; available from; http://www.dnd.ca/qol/pdf/01_15_e.pdf; Internet; accessed 19 February, 2006.

⁷³ Colonel Mike Capstick, *et al*, *Canada's Soldiers: Military Ethos and Canadian Values in the 21st Century*, (Ottawa: Director General – Land Combat Capability Development, 2005), 9

monetary rewards are factors that influence the decision cycle rather than being direct causes for the decision to leave. As explained by one person during an attrition survey:

We are very well paid but people want more and more. Pay is not the answer to our problems; the problems are in all the other areas. Too much work, not enough people, poor leadership, etc.⁷⁴

In order to better understand how the aspects of pay and time away from home affects a soldier's satisfaction with his job, it is important to realize that the real source of monetary irritation is the amount of work that soldiers do for their pay. This was confirmed in a recent QoL survey. The results showed that soldiers felt that their pay was not in line with the amount of work that they do, and that they were not adequately compensated for time spent away from home.⁷⁵ Thus, it can be deduced that it is the pace of work and the time away from home that makes soldiers feel they are being treated unfairly. It is now time to discuss the factors that most influence the pace of work, Operations Tempo (OPTEMPO) and Personnel Tempo (PERSTEMPO).

⁷⁴ Dunn and Morrow, *Should I Stay or Should I Go...*, 16.

⁷⁵ J. Dunn, K. Ford, and S. Flemming, *PERSTEMPO Qualitative Data: CF Member Focus Group Findings*, (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, Operational Research Division Technical Report TR2005/09, February 2005), 59.

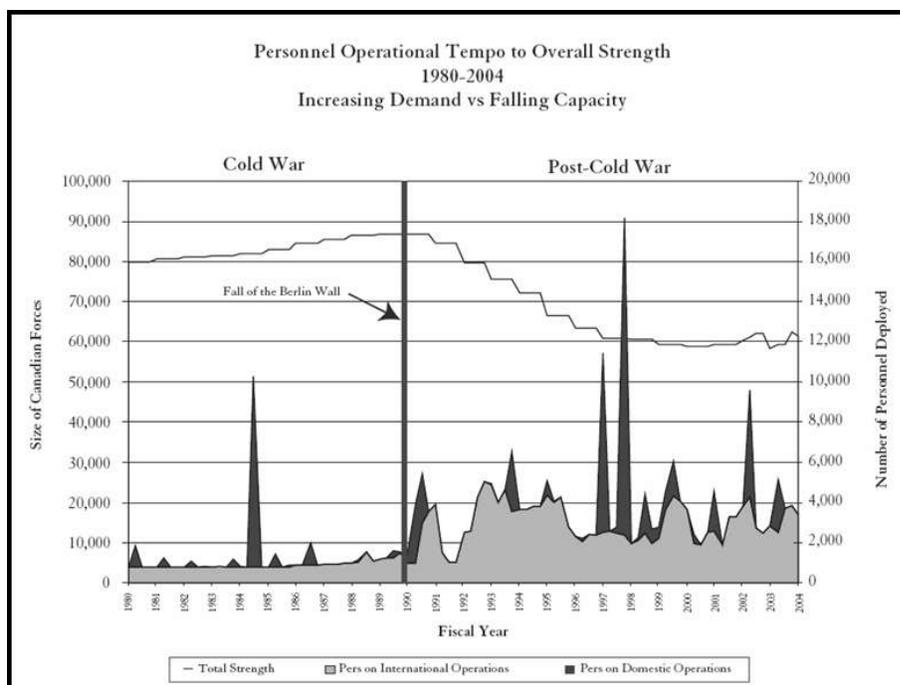


Figure 4-1 CF OPTEMPO
Source: Government of Canada⁷⁶

4.2 OPTEMPO and PERSTEMPO Defined

The Army is a dynamic and sometimes difficult lifestyle. One of the things that is increasing dissatisfaction amongst senior NCOS is the hectic Operations Tempo (OPTEMPO) of the CF. OPTEMPO is defined as the rate, size, and intensity of deployed missions undertaken by a military force relative to its size and strength.⁷⁷ In other words, OPTEMPO is the institutional measure of deployment rates. This measure, when coupled with time spent away from home for other purposes (training, inspections, etc) and

⁷⁶ Government of Canada, *Wounded: Canada's Military and the Legacy of Neglect*, (Ottawa: Parliament of Canada, 1 September, 2005), (Appendix VI) [Report on-line]; available from <http://www.parl.gc.ca/38/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/Com-e/defe-e/rep-e/repintsep05-e.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 January, 2007.

⁷⁷ Jason Dunn, Kim Ford, and Steven Flemming, *PERSTEMPO and HDDS: Service Provider Interview and Focus Group Findings*, (Ottawa: Centre for Operational Research and Analysis, Technical Memorandum 2006-04, February, 2006), 3.

garrison workload becomes PERSTEMPO.⁷⁸ Figure 4-1 clearly illustrates the increase in OPTEMPO since 1990. Notice in particular the increases in deployed international operations since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Much has been already been discussed about the reductions that the CF had during these years. It is now necessary to review those cutbacks to the CF in the specific way that they influence PERSTEMPO.

4.3 Why Has PERSTEMPO Increased Since the 1990s?

From 1990 to 1994, the Government of Canada was facing a unique and unprecedented challenge. The national debt was \$750 Billion and Canada's annual deficit was adding to that figure by \$37 Billion per year.⁷⁹ It was clear that the government had to get the debt under control. All government departments, including defence, faced severe budget cuts. It was during this period of budget reductions that the CF also faced an increasing demand for deployments in support of international peace and security. The Gulf War, the conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia, and the strife in the failing state of Somalia were the greatest challenges that the CF faced during this period. On the face of things, the 1994 White Paper seemed to acknowledge that there was a still a need to for a relatively large and capable CF that would be able to meet Canada's international security commitments.⁸⁰ In fact, the paper seemed to increase its post Cold War readiness in order to bolster its support to the UN. The following is a quotation is an excerpt of an academic review of the 1994 White Paper:

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Government of Canada, *1994 White Paper on Defence*, (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1994), (n.p.) [White Paper on-line]; available from <http://www.dnd.ca/admpol/content.asp?id={D48C96FF-4673-463D-9E77-3DB9771AD1ED}>; Internet; accessed 22 February, 2007.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Canada will increase its commitment of standby forces to the UN from a battalion, an air transport element, and a communications element to the vanguard component of its contingency forces – that is, two ships... one battle group, one infantry battalion group, one squadron of fighter aircraft, a flight of tactical transport aircraft, a communications element, and a headquarters element. If deployed simultaneously, this would represent a commitment of 4,000 personnel, which could then be sustained indefinitely.⁸¹

Despite the positive words that suggest added resources, the government elected to increase its security commitment “on the cheap.” Although the White Paper increased CF readiness in order to address the uncertainty of the new security environment, in actual fact the government also placed severe restrictions on the resources allocated to the military. This was openly acknowledged in the White Paper document:

Canadian defence commitments have been revised, personnel levels cut back, operations and maintenance budgets shrunk, defence infrastructure reduced, and capital programs cancelled or delayed. As a consequence of the further decline in defence expenditure that forms the fiscal context of this paper, cuts will be deeper, and there will be more reductions, cancellations, and delays. In some areas, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces will do less.⁸²

The deployment rates that are indicated in Figure 4-1 clearly demonstrate that it was wrong to assume that the end of the Cold War would mean a reduction of overseas commitments. The main impact of the resource limitations combined with higher than anticipated deployment rates meant that the CF could not adequately sustain these deployments from both the resource and personnel perspectives.⁸³ The resource reductions may have been necessary in order to reduce the deficit, but the impact of

⁸¹ Douglas L. Bland, “The 1994 White Paper on National Defence”, in *Canada’s National Defence: Volume 1 Defence Policy*, Douglas L. Bland, ed., (Kingston: Queen’s University, 1997), 360.

⁸² Government of Canada, *1994 White Paper on Defence...*, (n.p.).

⁸³ Brigadier General (ret’d) Joe Sharpe and Dr Alan English, *Observations on the Association between Operational Readiness and Personal Readiness in the Canadian Forces*, (Toronto: Defence Research and Development Canada, 31 March, 2006), 10.

actually increasing readiness and international commitments with not enough soldiers and equipment was telling. A CF internal audit conducted in 2004 revealed that in order to support the many CF missions during the previous decade, equipment and personnel had to be moved from unit to unit so that an appropriate Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) was available to sustain each subsequent deployment rotation.⁸⁴ This caused soldiers to deploy more often than they ought to, producing a profound effect on individual PERSTEMPO.

An additional problem is that most deployments have been manned with substantially fewer personnel than necessary.⁸⁵ A lack of personnel within an operational theatre causes the soldiers to work harder during the deployment and increases the fatigue and burnout caused by the mission. Another factor that has contributed to higher PERSTEMPO is that during the last 15 years the CF often exceeded the maximum ceiling of 4,000 deployed troops. In fact, during the CF deployments to the Former Yugoslavia from 1992 to 1994, the Army was deployed so much that a realistic force structure would suggest a required strength of 12 infantry battalions, instead of the nine that the CF had reduced to as a result of the cutbacks.⁸⁶

Many domestic factors have also increased PERSTEMPO. Firstly, Canadians have demanded more of their military in recent years than ever before. In conjunction with the many foreign operations that the CF has engaged in, there have also been several

⁸⁴ Department of National Defence, *Perspectives on Vanguard/MCF Readiness and Sustainment*, (NDHQ Ottawa: File 1258-137 (CRS) October, 2004), 8

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁶ Sean Maloney, "Choice: Force Structure or Forced Structure? The 1994 White Paper on Defence", in *Choices and Policy Matters, Volume 10, no. 5*, (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2004), 8-12. [Paper on-line]; available from <http://www.irpp.org/choices/archive/vol10no5.pdf>; Internet; accessed 13 February, 2007.

domestic operations in Canada during the last 15 years. Since 1990, Canadian Forces troops have deployed inside Canada for the Oka crisis (2,500 troops), the Red River floods in 1997 (8,700 personnel), the ice storms of 1998 (16,000 personnel), and the Y2K operation of 1999-2000 (during which nearly the entire CF was on readiness).⁸⁷ These large domestic operations, coupled with smaller missions like the 1998 Swiss Air disaster, the 2002 G8 Summit in Kananaskis, and the 2003 British Columbia forest fires show just how busy the downsized CF has been in Canada. Yet this demand for military support at home was needed despite the deep personnel and resource cuts that had taken place.

Concurrent with the operational missions both in Canada and abroad, there are the various other duties required of a senior NCO at home; tasks that still need to be completed despite manning shortfalls and increased deployments overseas. Supervisors are not plentiful and when operations are mounted overseas, the training and supervisory tasks for those who remain behind becomes more strenuous.⁸⁸ When other tasks are added, like professional development courses and advanced training, the workload is increased even more.

4.4 PERSTEMPO and Dissatisfaction

PERSTEMPO correlates to CF member dissatisfaction. However, the fact that soldiers are deploying to crisis areas is not the issue. Members of the military join for the

⁸⁷ Joseph T. Jockel, *The Canadian Forces: Hard Choices, Soft Power*, (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1999), 25. Note: The troop count for the Oka crisis was obtained from the Canadian Broadcasting Company, "Dramatic Showdown," http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-71-99-581/conflict_war/oka/clip7; Internet; accessed 12 April 2007.

⁸⁸ Lieutenant-General Mike Jeffery, "Chief of Land Staff's Speech to the Conference of Defence Associations," http://www.dnd.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=461; Internet; Accessed 1 March, 2007. Note: In this 2001 speech, the Chief of the Land Staff expressed that the Army was demanding too much of its leaders and that supervisor PERSTEMPO was too high.

action and adventure and these deployments bring meaning to their professional lives.⁸⁹ However, it is evident that the increase in the frequency of deployments caused by a shortage of personnel is beginning to have a detrimental effect on retention.⁹⁰ A recent QoL survey illustrates the depth of the problem. The survey asked for the soldier's stay/leave intentions, as well as the reasons for their potential decision to leave. Overwhelmingly, soldiers stated that much of their frustration comes from heavier workloads and more deployments, which is placing a greater strain on their family relationships.⁹¹ The government has begun to realize the depth of these problems and has taken steps to help rectify the issue. For example, the latest defence policy document (2005) plainly addressed that cuts in personnel had been too drastic, and pledged that more soldiers would be recruited in order to ease the problem.⁹² This is good news for the CF, but it remains to be seen if this is too little, too late.

Also problematic is deployment turbulence: a problem where a soldier's deployment schedule becomes increasingly unpredictable because of short notice operational requirements. This kind of operational intensity produces a situation that throws carefully planned deployment rotations into complete disarray. Short notice call-ups for deployment produces frustration, low morale, and a sense amongst the rank and file that the CF is in a situation of perpetual crisis management. In a survey of health care

⁸⁹ Christopher Ankerson and Losel Tethong, *Retain or Perish: Why Recruiting Won't Save the CF*, (Toronto: Strategic Institute of Strategic Studies, March, 2001), 3.

⁹⁰ Dunn and Morrow, *Should I Stay...*, 5. The survey said that many CF personnel are having to choose between staying in the CF or losing their families.

⁹¹ Evans, *Assessing Individual Wellness...*, 5.

⁹² Government of Canada, "Message from the Minister," http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Reports/budget06/message_e.asp; Internet; accessed 18 March 2007.

providers within the CF, many have noticed that soldiers are becoming more strained by the pace of work and the hectic nature of their duties. The report illustrated that appropriate workload levels have long been surpassed and, that unless this problem is acted upon soon, health problems and attrition will increase.⁹³

The final result of the PERSTEMPO problem is that the levels of burnout, stress, and health disorders have increased among personnel who have been sent on too many operations, too often. The highest deployment rate of recent years was during the mid-1990s, a period that unsurprisingly coincided with highest incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder amongst the exhausted soldiers of the Canadian Army.⁹⁴ The senior NCOs that are the subject of this paper were junior NCOs and young Sergeants during this period. They were at the forefront of these stressful deployments, and high PERSTEMPO is certain to have been a source of dissatisfaction for these soldiers.

4.5 A Loss of Commitment – The Worst Threat to Senior NCO Retention

As a result of the trend that has seen most companies shift towards an “employer of choice” retention methodology, the psychological concept of commitment has been increasingly studied by many HR strategists.⁹⁵ A committed employee will be likely to stay with an organization through the best and the worst of times. Someone who is committed to the aims and mission of an organization will also do their best to further

⁹³ Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, “PERSTEMPO and HDDS...”, 23, 29, 35.

⁹⁴ Department of National Defence, *Croatia Board of Inquiry...*, (n.p.). Note: The report specifically mentioned the cumulative effects of high OPTEMPO on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

⁹⁵ Ellen Ernst Kossek and Richard N. Block, *Managing Human Resources in the 21st Century: From Core Concepts to Strategic Choice*, (Cincinnati, Ohio: South-Western College Publishing, 2000), 1.17. Note: Throughout the course of researching this subject, the author continuously came across the aspect of commitment in relation to workforce retention and attrition. This reference (a textbook for students who are seeking a professional HR designation) was chosen to illustrate the level of acceptance of commitment as an HR strategy and mainstream philosophy.

those aims, all the while seeking better practices and more efficient methods to meet organizational objectives. For all of these reasons, it should naturally follow that the military should seek out practices that will enhance the level of commitment of its troops.

Commitment as a concept of organizational behaviour is divided into three main areas of study; continuance commitment, affective commitment, and finally normative commitment.⁹⁶ The first type of commitment is continuance commitment, which is a cost-benefit analysis that an employee will embark upon in order to evaluate the costs involved with leaving that organization. An employee with high levels of continuance commitment stays with an organization because he *needs* to. Affective commitment refers to the employee's emotional attachment and involvement with an organization. In this type of commitment, the employee will remain working for the organization because he *wants* to. Normative commitment refers to an intrinsic obligation that an employee feels towards the organization; this kind of employee stays with the organization because he feels he *ought* to.

In the CF context, continuance commitment refers to the need for an employee to maintain their rate of pay and serve until they can collect their pension. This assumption can be made because most soldiers who remain beyond the first exit gate (at the end of the first BE) will remain in the forces in order to collect their pension.⁹⁷ Thus, we can

⁹⁶ John P. Meyer and Natalie J. Allen, *Commitment in the Workplace: Theory Research and Application*, (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1997), 11. Note: Meyer and Allen are Canadian psychology professors who are employed at the University of Western Ontario. Throughout the research for this paper, the author noted that these authors figure prominently in the research works of several other academics. Their theories figure prominently in military retention models around the world, including the models being used by the US Navy and NATO. All three of the commitment definitions are contained within this single reference.

⁹⁷ Hamel and Pinch, *Models of Military Service...*, 41.

conclude that the pension scheme is currently able to maintain senior NCOs continuance commitment at a high enough level to offset any QoL dissatisfaction that was discussed in the first part of this chapter. That being said, at least one trade in the Army (Combat Engineer) shows some disturbing trends regarding the attrition senior NCOs. It appears that these soldiers and their prospective replacements are leaving before they are eligible to collect their pension.⁹⁸ Therefore, the CF has begun to see a drop in continuance commitment levels in at least one trade.

Normative commitment usually stems from values acquired by the individual during the initial or on-going employee socialization process.⁹⁹ Because senior NCOs are already highly versed in military ethos, normative commitment has very little influence on senior NCO attrition and retention. Therefore, since continuance commitment is pay and pension related and since normative commitment is largely discounted as an effect due to senior NCO length of service, this section will concentrate on the effects that affective commitment has had on CF attrition. This assumption is in line with research regarding workplace commitment that says that this affective commitment is the most important contributor to employee turnover intentions.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ This information was received by the author in an email request for information. WO JJLD Lacasse, the Combat Engineer Career Manager, explained in this email that he was very concerned about the health of his trade as a result of several unanticipated departures at the senior NCO and Master Corporal ranks. WO Lacasse described that these departures were the result of hiring in the powerful "Oil Patch" economy in Alberta. This unanticipated attrition, coupled with medical limitations amongst other soldiers, is making the management of succession planning untenable.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, (n.p.).

¹⁰⁰ Meyer and Allen, *Commitment in the Workplace...*, 67.

4.5.1 Leadership and Soldier Commitment

The value of a military organization is often measured by two things: the quality of its leadership, and the morale of its troops. Studies of workplace behaviour have shown that this strong relationship between leadership and affective commitment exists,¹⁰¹ so it follows that strong military organizations should have no problem retaining individuals. That said, in the case of the CF it has been postulated by some researchers that there has been significant erosion in the quality of leadership in recent years, which has caused a reduction in the levels of affective commitment amongst those who have left, or may leave, the forces.¹⁰²

Meyer and Allan propose that affective commitment is enhanced when employees feel that they work in a fair and just organization and that they can participate in the decision making process. Further, they recommend that employees are more affectively committed when they are told the reasons why certain decisions are taken.¹⁰³ In the military this is called transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a methodology that involves participative engagement that serves to motivate someone to go above and beyond the call of duty, for the good of the unit and the organization.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Barbara B. Brown, "Employees' Organizational Commitment and Their Perception of Supervisors' Relations-Oriented and Task-Oriented Leadership Behaviours," (Dissertation: Virginia Polytechnique Institute, 25 March, 2003), 29 [Dissertation on-line]; available from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-04072003-224349/unrestricted/BarbaraBrown-4-22-03.pdf>; Internet; accessed 5 February, 2007.

¹⁰² Ankerson and Tethong, 3-4. See also: Capstick, *et al*, *Canada's Soldiers...*, 50-53.

¹⁰³ Meyer and Allen, *Commitment in the Workplace...*, 46.

¹⁰⁴ Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-003 *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Doctrine*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 2005), 23-24.

It is apparent from numerous surveys and studies that the Canadian Army has severe deficiencies in the area of transformational leadership. The recent *Army Culture and Climate Survey* reported that most soldiers feel that they are led in a transactional way, which focuses on an exchange of good work for promotion or other rewards.¹⁰⁵ Transactional leadership sometimes has its place in a military organization, but in most situations this form of leadership can have a deleterious affect on morale and the perceived quality of justice within the organization.¹⁰⁶ The culture survey suggests that transformational leadership was not being used by senior and unit leaders within the CF, especially when observations are made from the perspective of junior NCMs, sergeants and warrant officers.¹⁰⁷ This trend is repeated in even stronger language in various exit surveys. One such survey showed that the lack of subordinate participation was one of the main reasons for attrition. As the report noted:

Another source of frustration identified by members was that leaders often do not acknowledge the work and ideas brought forward by subordinates. Given the lack of personnel and the current workload of the CF, members found the lack of acknowledgement especially problematic.¹⁰⁸

4.5.2 Poor Training and Lost Soldier Commitment

Another problem that affects soldier commitment is the confidence that they have in their abilities. According to Meyer and Allen, personnel who lack confidence in their ability to do their jobs will have lower levels of affective commitment.¹⁰⁹ This suggests

¹⁰⁵ Capstick, *et al*, *Canada's Soldiers...*, 35-36.

¹⁰⁶ Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-004 *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2005), 65-66.

¹⁰⁷ Capstick, *et al*, *Canada's Soldiers...*, 36, 38.

¹⁰⁸ Dunn and Morrow, *Should I Stay...*, 10.

that organizations that expend the most effort and resources on training will have high levels of retention amongst their employees. The Army also has some serious problems in this area. The recent *Army Culture Survey* showed that many soldiers had concerns about their readiness and expressed that training was often “based on outdated rote learning and [that] standards were perceived as minimal.”¹¹⁰ An attrition survey also points out that the lack of proper training was a motivating factor to those who left the Forces. According to an observation in the survey:

While a small number reported being satisfied with their training, the majority indicated that improvements were required. It was often stated that the CF needed to take training more seriously by investing more resources (personnel, time, money, equipment, etc.) into it. Providing members with proper training and resources required to do their jobs was of great importance to all ranks.¹¹¹

4.5.3 A Career with Limited Fulfilment

Another key enabler for high levels of affective commitment is the need for the employee to be fulfilled in their work. Fulfilment goes right to the root of affective commitment because employees get much of their own perceptions of self-worth from this need. Therefore, an organization that takes the fulfilment of their employees seriously will work on ways to develop them, promote them, and provide them with challenges.¹¹² Here too the CF has fallen down in its obligation to its soldiers. For the last 15 years, promotions have been stagnant and many very competent soldiers have been left in ranks that do not reward their ambitions for more responsibility. According to one study, up to 65% of all leavers from the CF indicated the lack of professional

¹⁰⁹ Meyer and Allen, *Commitment in the Workplace...*, 44.

¹¹⁰ Capstick, et al, *Canada's Soldiers: Military Ethos...*, 49.

¹¹¹ Dunn and Morrow, *Should I Stay...*, 13.

¹¹² Meyer and Allen, *Commitment in the Workplace...*, 48-49.

opportunities and challenges were the main reason for their departure.¹¹³ Others have sought promotion for the wrong reasons. Increasingly, soldiers in the CF see a promotion as being the only way to increase income. At the same time they also view a promotion as a punishment because the advancement in rank also involves a move away from their current location and/or additional duties.¹¹⁴ Another problem with seeking promotions as a means to enhance financial stability is that certain soldiers will strive hard for promotion only to advance to a level where they are not happy, thereby decreasing their fulfilment and levels of affective commitment. As noted by one soldier in a recent attrition survey:

The only reason they accept their promotion is for extra money for their families, but after a while they can't take doing admin [sic] and leave the CF. We are shooting ourselves in the foot by not being flexible and we end-up losing very experienced people.¹¹⁵

In summary, it is evident that the CF has lost and will lose soldiers because of a loss of commitment to the organization. Some of this trend is because of the needs of specific individuals. For this reason, small scale commitment problems will always be a reality even in the best led military organizations. As was revealed in the first part of this chapter, the QoL aspects of military life can be dealt with fairly easily through improvement initiatives. However, it is important to realize that it is possible for a soldier's level of affective commitment to become so eroded that he will leave the forces even if the decision does not make sense from a QoL perspective. As a final note to this

¹¹³ Ankerson and Tethong, *Retain or Perish...*, 3.

¹¹⁴ Dunn and Morrow, *Should I Stay...*, 14.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

chapter it is important to reiterate that the loss of soldier commitment is a reality that must be dealt with. As one CF member expressed during his exit survey:

Before I would do this job for free. I had such a good time. Today, there are too many corners being cut to deal with the media and there are too many cutbacks. The intangibles that offset pay are gone. People are fed-up, there are no plans, there's nothing to look forward to.¹¹⁶

This sentiment shows the level of frustration of just one former member of the CF. In an environment with low levels of commitment, at best these soldiers will be marking time until retirement; at worst they will leave the CF for a different job regardless of the personal consequences. If the CF continues to lose members of the Army senior NCO corps because of commitment issues, the consequence will be a drastic loss of efficiency and effectiveness.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

5.0 Development of a Retention Model and Strategy Within the CF

A military retention model is designed to explain the various factors that will influence a member's decision to stay or leave the forces. In the military context, a certain level of attrition is desirable so that the organization will be strong and vibrant and have the best possible workforce. To that end, it becomes necessary to eliminate undesirable soldiers so that the army can enhance its effectiveness. Equally important to an army is the need to retain soldiers with skills and potential, an activity that also contributes to the efficacy of the organization. As a result, military HR planners have designed Terms of Service (TOS) and career exit gates that facilitate a predictable turnover of personnel. However, as has already been discussed in this paper, a soldier's decision to leave the forces is not always predictable. To bring some semblance of predictability to this seemingly chaotic behaviour, military HR strategists devise retention and turnover models that help to define the influences and factors that will motivate a soldier's decision making process. Canada is no exception and for this reason it is valuable to give a broad overview of CF retention modelling, and compare this modelling to current CF retention strategies. In this way an assessment can be made as to whether the retention of CF senior NCOs will be a success.

It is quite remarkable just how many models there are to describe military attrition and retention. Within the Canadian context, there are several different models that have had varying degrees of influence on CF studies. It is not the purpose of this paper to review the merits and demerits of the various models in detail. Instead, a brief description of the historical development of retention modelling and a description of the current model will be sufficient to support the conclusions of this paper.

5.1 The Historical Development of Retention Modelling in the CF

In 2000, researchers Claude Hamel and Franklin Pinch were commissioned by the Assistant Deputy Minister Personnel to make recommendations for an all encompassing recruiting and retention model that could be applied strategically to the entire force. Before they embarked on proposing a way ahead, they concluded that previous CF efforts at this kind of modelling were both haphazard and ineffective.¹¹⁷ The cause of this was multi-faceted. Firstly, most of the activity was put towards gathering information from recent leavers, but the information gathered was not put to good use for empirical study. The information collection tools were outdated and did not match the models being used at the time. Most studies of attrition were entirely reactive, with research effort being applied to classifications that were already under strain. Information was being collected on people who had already elected to release, even those who it was reasonable to assume would leave (like people with medical problems and those who had served long periods). Lastly, the collection of information from all leavers clouded the issues that were most important for researchers; that is the necessity to study the factors that motivate those who leave when it is not expected.

The CF was not alone in this approach. A recent paper that was written to explore the application of civilian retention modelling within the military context revealed some similar conclusions. A group of three researchers from New Zealand and the United States concluded that military retention modeling in many Western forces was focused on the simple “data-mining” of organizational and demographic details of individual leavers,

¹¹⁷ Hamel and Pinch, *Models of Military Service...*, 22-26.

rather than the specific influences that motivated their decision to leave.¹¹⁸ Civilian HR researchers have an entirely different thrust to retention modelling. Instead of just reviewing statistics for people who have left, civilian researchers seemed to dig deeper into the motivations for both leaving and staying. Factors such as personality, job effect, and organizational variables are investigated in order to generate proximate and distal *predictors* of retention and attrition.

Hamel and Pinch's assessment of Canadian efforts seemed to have some positive results. Unlike researchers in most other states, CF researchers have long been influenced by civilian retention and attrition models. The first efforts began just after unification and this trend was continued in the 1980s and 90s. Examples of the use of civilian models that were modified for CF use included the Azjen Fishbein model and the Mobly model. These models were applied to retention studies regarding specific MOCs (for examples doctors and engineers) with very good results.¹¹⁹ However, although these studies yielded positive results in these specific cases, it must be remembered that the research was conducted in a reactive way and in response to a retention problem that already existed. Additionally, while there has been very good success in specific cases, the problems that were discussed earlier regarding data collection methods have led to a lack of success across all MOCs and environments.

Since the late 1990s a new upsurge in retention studies began in Canada. The first increase in retention interest came as an offshoot of the spotlight on QoL concerns in the

¹¹⁸ John Capon, O.S. Chernyshenko, and Stephen E. Stark, *Applicability of Civilian Retention Theory in the New Zealand Military*, (International Military Testing Organization, 2004), (n.p.) [Research Paper on-line]; available from; <http://www.internationalmta.org/Documents/2004/2004047P.pdf>; Internet; accessed 5 January 2007.

¹¹⁹ Hamel and Pinch, *Models of Military Service...*, 28-31.

CF. The Standing Committee on National Defence and Veteran's Affairs (SCONDVA) heard testimony from hundreds of military members from across the nation. Reports of poor housing, abysmal pay, inadequate medical care, and scores of other complaints yielded some 89 recommendations for QoL improvements.¹²⁰ These change initiatives resulted in coincident retention initiatives that were driven by these recommendations. HR research was redirected in many ways towards these QoL retention initiatives, ultimately resulting in the generation of a proposed QoL retention model.¹²¹

In reality this was an incorrect road to follow. QoL is not a means for increasing retention. Instead QoL issues such as pay, working conditions and the like are both sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction depending on the perspective of the person. Frederick Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory stipulates that QoL issues are "hygiene factors" that need to be looked after, with solid HR policies that are secondary to the motivational aspects of job design and workplace leadership.¹²² Thus, real motivation comes from the type of employment where a soldier feels that he is making a difference. This theory appears to coincide well with QoL survey responses made by CF members. In the words of one respondent:

We would give up pay raises for more resources. People join the military to be a part of something, to feel a sense of family. They want a family effect. Well, when you have no resources and everybody is leaving because of it, you feel disappointed by your family. Your family is essentially not giving you the tools to

¹²⁰ Department of National Defence, "Status of SCONDVA Recommendations," http://www.dnd.ca/hr/scondva/Engraph/scondva_summary_2004_e.asp?cat=1; Internet; accessed 22 February 2007.

¹²¹ Major Rob Morrow, *Recruiting and Retention of Military Personnel: Influences Of Quality Of Life And Personnel Tempo*, (Ottawa: Directorate of Strategic Human Resources, 2004), 8.

¹²² Gregory Moorhead and Ricky Griffin, *Organizational Behaviour*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 115.

grow-up, to make you all that you can be. I don't want to do a half-assed job, I want to do a good job and feel like I am a part of something that is bigger than I am.¹²³

Suffice to say, until 2001 the majority of the research that has taken place has been concentrating on job satisfaction and QoL factors as opposed to soldier commitment.¹²⁴ Further, organizational commitment was always recognized in CF models but more from a perspective of continuance commitment (the need to stay), rather than affective commitment (the desire to stay). Organizational commitment was most often a subset category of various models, rather than a direct contributor to retention or attrition. This observation is confirmed in the research paper by Hamel and Pinch, which concluded that affective commitment lacked clarity as a variable and was “redundant” as a stand-alone factor.¹²⁵

It is surprising that retention models from some civilian studies would use affective commitment as a key variable, while a military model would reject it as being redundant. Leadership is the very factor that defines a strong military organization. As the conclusion to the *Army Culture Survey* recently revealed, affective commitment is directly linked to transformational leadership, because this form of leadership provides motivation for a soldier by providing the *vision* that goes along with the task.¹²⁶ The concepts of commitment, motivation, leadership, and vision are all intrinsically linked

¹²³ Dunn, *et al*, *PERSTEMPO Qualitative Data...*, 9.

¹²⁴ Hamel and Pinch, 27 - 38, Annexes E-G.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*. Note: The discussion on page 27 of this reference discusses how important affective commitment is to predicting turnover behaviour. However, the discussion of Mobly's model (used extensively in CF research) and Hamel and Pinch's proposed retention model propose to discount this variable because it is ambiguous.

¹²⁶ Capstick et al., *Canada's Soldiers...*, 44.

and thus, soldier commitment should be a natural by product of transformational leadership and vice versa. In summary, leadership and commitment should be of the utmost importance to retention initiatives in the military context.

5.2 The Current CF Retention Model

After 2001 the focus of CF retention efforts changed. Retention suddenly became of great importance as the military started to become cognizant of the looming post-FRP demographic crisis.¹²⁷ In 2001, the CF embarked on a Retention Action Plan which was brought into force in order to turn the CF into a retention oriented organization.¹²⁸ Part of the plan was the design of a new retention model designed by Villeneuve & Dobрева-Martinova (see Figure 5-1).¹²⁹ According to this new model, three main factors have a

¹²⁷ Douglas J. Cook and Karol W. J. Wenek, *Regular Force Retention Policies*, (Ottawa: DND Briefing Note for SCONSAD, February, 2005), (n.p.).

¹²⁸ Note: until this time CF HR practices were entirely attrition oriented. This was much larger than just the FRP and the “downsizing” culture of the time. For example, until 2001 the CF awarded a significant severance package to officers at the expiry of their short service engagement (9 years service) in order to incite them to leave the forces. Training at most levels was selection oriented, rather than developmentally oriented. This attrition culture surely sent a message to many people who may have stayed in the service if a retention culture had existed.

¹²⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel Martin Villeneuve, Tzvetanka Dobрева-Martinova, and John G. Currie, *Buying Low Attrition or Building High Retention? That is the Question*, (Ottawa: Directorate of Military Employment Policy Report 2004-06, June, 2004), 24.

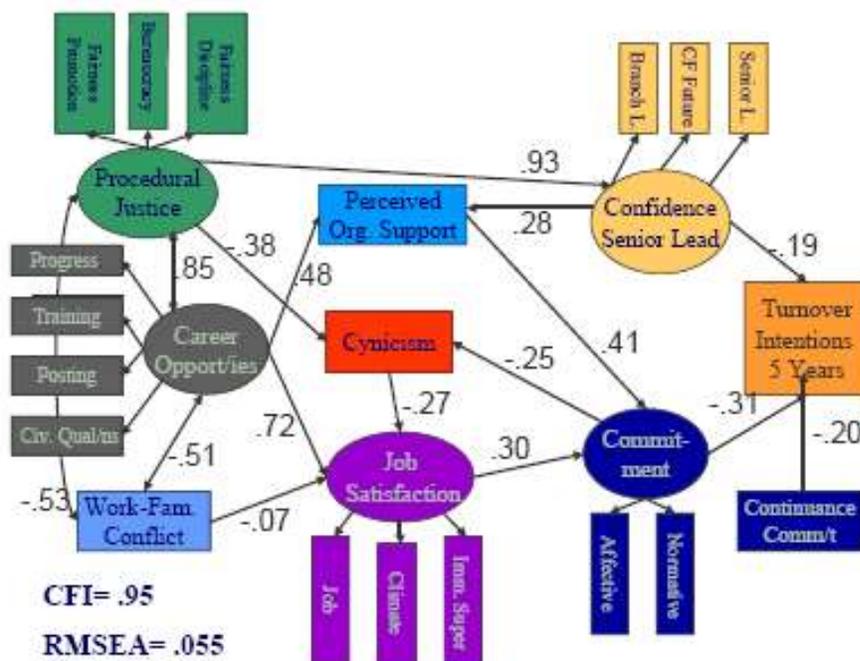


Figure 5-1 CF Retention Model
Source: Villeneuve, *et al Buying Low Attrition...*, 24.

direct influence on a CF member’s turnover decision: organizational commitment, continuance commitment, and confidence in the senior leadership. All other factors are indirect and influence turnover intentions through one of the three main influence factors. Organizational commitment is made up of two subsets within the model: affective and normative commitment. The designers of the model also call organizational commitment “emotional commitment” and it is this factor that is considered to be the strongest predictor of turnover intentions.¹³⁰ Another variable that is an interesting part of the model is the inclusion of leadership factors as an influence on the stay/leave decision cycle. This is a very valuable factor to include in a military retention model, and it is of extremely high importance in the CF in view of the extensive dissatisfaction expressed by

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

CF members regarding leadership issues.¹³¹ The inclusion of leadership as a key influencing factor, coupled with the high importance placed on organizational commitment, makes this a very strong model for military applications. This has been backed up by several empirical tests, which have proven the model's utility for the CF.¹³²

In conclusion, CF models have evolved over time and this has been translated into an intention to pursue soldier commitment as the key factor for retention efforts. Also critical is the incorporation of leadership influences into the model. While these two factors are admittedly very difficult to measure and quantify, the incorporation of these concepts into the model helps to bring a level of maturity to it that goes far beyond simple “data-mining” and the collection of statistics. The next section of this chapter will illustrate how the CF has followed up the model with a retention based HR strategy.

5.3 The CF Retention Strategy

The Canadian Forces recently published *Military HR Strategy 2020: Facing the People Challenges of the Future*, the main strategic document regarding CF HR that will guide the practices of the future. This strategy has followed through with the assumption that quality leadership and soldier commitment are the key facets of retention within the CF. At the same time, the strategy also recognizes the importance of insuring that QoL

¹³¹ While conducting the research for this paper, the author reviewed the results of several CF surveys. The underlying tone of each and every survey was a deep frustration regarding leadership amongst the rank and file. This included dissatisfaction with leaders at the unit, senior military, and government levels. In general, the senior leadership (both governmental and military) was not perceived as trustworthy. While these are surveys and essentially a collection of opinions, the academic rigour applied to the findings show that this leadership problem is indeed a reality.

¹³² Villeneuve *et al*, *Buying Low Attrition...*, 23-24

issues remain a high priority, so that these aspects of a soldier's life will not become a source of dissatisfaction that will influence the individual's level of commitment.¹³³

This HR strategy and the Retention Action Plan of 2001 have led to the development of an overall retention programme within the CF. Many of the tenets of the programme are commitment and leadership oriented. The CF has also embarked on developing a retention culture as part of this overarching HR programme.¹³⁴ The strategy has two aspects. The first part is the HR management aspect, which includes monitoring attrition rates and conducting surveys of both serving members and those who take their release. The purpose of these activities is to proactively monitor conditions of service and turnover intentions/actions with the view of determining cause and effect relationships between the factors and the intent/act. The focus of these efforts are at the CF level and do not deal with stressed trades. These cause and effect relationships are fed to the National Retention Team, who will take action when the situation warrants.¹³⁵ This programme is less reactive in nature and seeks to find long-term solutions to retention issues. A second aspect of the retention effort deals with particular stressed trades. The CF initiated a Retention Intervention Team with a process to react to attrition problems that are affecting particular trades. The programme involves identifying

¹³³ Department of National Defence, *Military HR Strategy 2020: Facing the People Challenges of the Future*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 2002), 21.

¹³⁴ Department of National Defence, "ADM (HR-MIL) Instruction 08-03: The Canadian Forces Retention Intervention Process," http://www.forces.gc.ca/hr/instructions/engraph/0803_admhrmil_e.asp; Internet; accessed 4 March 2007.

¹³⁵ The National Retention Team comprises some of the highest ranking officers in the CF. The team is comprised of the Chief of the Land Staff, Chief of the Air Staff, Chief of the Maritime Staff, CF Provost Marshall, Chief of the CF Medical Group, and the Chief of Military Personnel. This demonstrates the importance placed on the development of a CF retention culture.

stressed trades, diagnosing the problems affecting the trade, and proposing long and short-term solutions.

An article in the CF Personnel Newsletter describes the overall retention programme in some detail. It is clear from this article that the strategy seeks to maintain the motivation of CF members so that they will choose to stay in the CF. While QoL is an important factor that is acknowledged to increase satisfaction, the main thrust of the programme is commitment oriented. Most important to the retention programme is the focus on leadership. According to the author, Karol Wenek, retention is a leadership function that should permeate all levels of command within the CF.¹³⁶ Even low ranking supervisors need to take some responsibility for ensuring that CF members stay with the Forces.

In conclusion, the development and use of modelling to predict the turnover of CF personnel has matured significantly over the last decade. Now CF HR strategists fully understand how sound leadership and organizational commitment have a direct causal relationship with the level of retention. This has been echoed with the development of a retention based culture as enunciated in the CF HR strategy. The strategy has led to a sound retention programme, with a robust long-term retention effort combined with an effective intervention programme that can deal with short term problems. This top down congruence of model, strategy and programmes will surely be the way ahead for the future. It is now time to review if the strategies are effective, in particular regarding the retention of the senior NCOs of the army.

¹³⁶ Karol Wenek, "If We Build It, You Will Stay" *Canadian Forces Personnel Newsletter*, 22 March, 2006, (n.p.) [Newsletter on-line]; available from; http://www.dnd.ca/hr/cfnp/engraph/3_06/3_06_dmep_retention_e.asp; Internet; accessed 15 March, 2007.

6.0 Senior NCO Retention in the CF – A Report Card

Previously this paper reviewed the nature of the demographic problem facing the senior NCO corps and some of the sources of dissatisfaction that challenge soldier retention within the army. It is now time to change the focus of the essay towards recent retention initiatives and their possible effect for senior NCOs. The conclusion reached in the previous chapter was that retention initiatives must focus on three things. They are:

1. Soldier commitment is the foremost issue affecting retention. If senior NCOs are committed to the organization, their morale will be higher and their intention to stay will increase;
2. The second most important factor that affects soldier retention is senior leadership within the forces. Retention is much more difficult when soldiers feel that their senior leadership is poor; and
3. QoL policies (pay, working conditions, etc) have an indirect effect on turnover decisions. Even so, the CF must endeavour to keep these QoL issues as competitive as possible; otherwise dissatisfaction will indirectly degrade soldier commitment.

The argument of this chapter will follow these three guiding principles. During the course of reviewing recent initiatives, it is important for the reader to remember one indisputable factor: any strategy that the CF uses must overcome a pervasive level of cynicism within the rank and file. This factor is seen as so prevalent within the CF that the designers of the retention model have included cynicism as an indirect, yet central, retention influence factor (see Figure 6-1 to review the effect that cynicism has within the model).¹³⁷ An investigation of recent progress regarding the three retention concepts listed above will be made in order to assess whether these initiatives are enough to keep senior NCOs in the Army.

¹³⁷ Villeneuve et al, *Buying Low Attrition...*, 26.

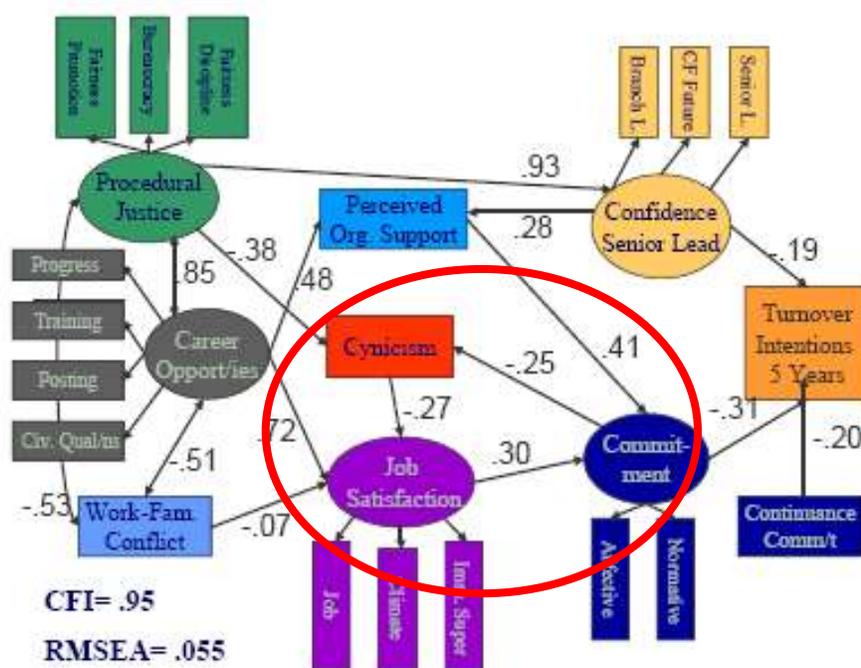


Figure 6-1 – Cynicism and Retention
Source: Villeneuve, et al

6.1 Initiatives to Improve Senior NCO Commitment

In previous parts of this paper it was revealed that organizational commitment is made up of three subsets; affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC) and continuance commitment (CC). These three aspects are key to any strategy that is designed to enhance the retention of army senior NCOs. This paper will discuss each of these commitment types in turn, and investigate if current CF initiatives are effective.

6.1.1 Initiatives that Enhance Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment is based on the costs that a soldier will evaluate when he is making a decision to stay or to leave. Continuance commitment deals with pension, pay, and other similar issues and, as such, this form of commitment is non-motivational in

its purpose. That being said, the military has undertaken one major effort that will enhance continuance commitment in the long term.

On 1 March 2007, the government announced approval of the CF Pension Modernization Project.¹³⁸ This programme has two key features. First, it de-links Terms of Service from pension benefits. In this way, one can collect a pension so long as a minimum of three years of service have been completed. This is a major step forward from a fairness perspective, since nearly all military members can now take advantage of the pension plan regardless of whether they were long service veterans or not. This also indirectly provides a minor improvement in affective commitment because it enhances fairness by including virtually all soldiers in the pension scheme. Still, the improvement is minimal since the member cannot collect the pension annuity until age 60. Though the benefit is applied to all, for short service personnel the benefit cannot be collected until many years later.

The improvement most gained from the pension modernization is evident from a continuance commitment perspective. Those soldiers who will remain for long service will now need to stay in the CF for 25 years before they can collect an immediate annuity. One can leave earlier, but the ability to enhance one's income with a pension benefit is delayed by five years. As revealed earlier, this is the main reason why soldiers currently leave at the 20 years of service point. Thus, the continuance commitment of the member is enhanced because he will now likely remain until 25 years of service. That said, in the case of current senior NCOs, the pension modernization scheme will not enhance continuance commitment because all currently serving personnel are covered by a

¹³⁸ Department of National Defence, "CF Pension Modernization Project," http://www.dnd.ca/dgcb/cfpmp/engraph/home_e.asp?sidesection=5&sidecat=17; Internet; accessed 6 February 2007.

“grandfather clause.” Unless the senior NCO decides to elect to the new system, this programme will do little to enhance retention because those who want to stay will likely change to the new programme, while those that wish to leave can still retire with 20 years of service under the old pension programme.

Continuance commitment is largely a function of pension and civilian/military pay differential for CF members. The pension gate at 20 years of service will remain a great motivator for senior NCOs to leave the forces and the new CF pension plan will do nothing to convert those that are sitting on the fence. Regarding continuance commitment policies, the CF has not provided any incentive for senior NCOs to stay.

6.1.2 Initiatives that Enhance Normative Commitment

We will now shift away from the transactional aspects of continuance commitment and discuss some normative commitment (NC) retention initiatives. Recall that normative commitment is the *obligation* that a soldier feels to serve in the forces, thus when deciding what features of military service would make a senior NCO feel he ought to remain in the forces, two conclusions can be drawn. First, the formal leadership training that an NCO receives would impart a military ethos that would enforce a sense of obligation on the NCO. Secondly, a senior NCO may feel obliged to remain in the forces out of a need to ensure that the troops are properly cared for.

From this perspective, the main CF programmes that are designed to enhance normative commitment would be the formal training that provides senior NCOs sense of ethos and professionalism. The CF has been remiss in its provision of NCM professional development training until very recently. Up until just a few years ago, there were only two courses for NCMs that delivered leadership and ethos training. The Junior Leader’s

and Senior Leader's Courses were held respectively for Master Corporals and Warrant Officers. Though these were ostensibly leadership courses, the training provided was poorly focused and rudimentary and did little to build ethos or enhance NCM professionalism.¹³⁹

However, since 2001 there has been a profound review of NCO professional development. Now NCO education has greater emphasis on the normative commitment aspects of character building and the development of judgement and ethos. This change in focus stems from the recent development of a CF ethics doctrine. According to the CF manual *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in the Canadian Forces*, the NCO corps is a body that shall demonstrate their professionalism by "understanding, accepting and fulfilling all the commitments and responsibilities inherent in the profession of arms."¹⁴⁰ As professionals, *Duty with Honour* goes on to say that NCMs need to strive for knowledge of their profession and that they "...have a duty to acquire this knowledge and keep it current."¹⁴¹ It is this that has been the impetus for the recent implementation of the CF NCM Professional Development (PD) Programme. Formal courses are being developed so that the transfer of this knowledge can be institutionalized through military professional education.¹⁴²

Will these new professional education programmes enhance normative commitment? According to Meyer and Allen, normative commitment is increased

¹³⁹ Department of National Defence, *The Canadian Forces Non-Commissioned Member in the 21st Century...*, I-25.

¹⁴⁰ Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-001 *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada*, (Kingston, ON: DND Canada, 2003), 11, 19.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 18.

whenever a person feels that they are working in a role that is “right and moral.”¹⁴³

Therefore, a rigorous and demanding programme that concentrates on ethos, judgement and professional conduct is certain to enhance normative commitment. But the CF must not live under the impression that this training will automatically result in an NCO corps that will feel obligated to serve. If training of this nature is conducted without the proper provision of time and resources for real learning, it will only result in increased cynicism. Further, while this training may have the best of intentions, it may serve only to be an impediment to an NCOs ambitions and an obstacle to proper succession planning.¹⁴⁴

The development of the NCM PD programme was initiated in 2002 with the view to attaining many of the initial landmarks within five years.¹⁴⁵ It is true that the programme has made great strides for the future generations, but it can be concluded that these developments have little impact on the retention of those senior NCOs who will soon reach 20 years of service. Some of the new programmes are in place, including the commissioning of the NCM Professional Development Centre and full commencement of four of the five new courses.¹⁴⁶ But all these programmes are predicated on having the time set aside for a soldier to take part in the training. The way that the Army proposed it would ensure that time would be available for PD training was through the introduction of a Managed Readiness Programme (MRP), whereby all soldiers would have a period rest and reconstitution with which to complete this kind of training. With the pace of

¹⁴³ Meyer and Allen, *Commitment in the Workplace...*, 60.

¹⁴⁴ Allan English, “The Senior NCO Corps and Professionalism: Where do we Stand?”, (Research Paper, CF Leadership Institute, 8 February, 2005), 23-24.

¹⁴⁵ Department of National Defence, *The Canadian Forces Non-Commissioned Member...*, II-1.

¹⁴⁶ Department of National Defence, “Canadian Forces NCM Professional Development Centre,” http://www.cfsj.forces.gc.ca/ncmpdc/engraph/home_e.asp; Internet; accessed 15 March 2007.

operations and the hectic training activity that is underway for those soldiers that remain in Canada, there is evidence that the MRP is not functioning as well as it needs to, especially in the case of key personnel and distressed trades.¹⁴⁷ Since senior NCOs are already shorthanded, the time available for PD training is not adequate to the needs of the Army. Therefore, these developments are long term improvements that will only affect the senior NCOs of the future, and then only if an appropriate change in force structure or task predictability occurs.

The only normative commitment issue that will make these senior NCOs feel they ought to remain with the forces comes from the sense of obligation that these leaders feel for their subordinates. With CF troops engaged in action in Afghanistan, it is this author's assessment that this obligation is real and strong. Meyer and Allen confirm this phenomenon by observing that the values of an organization (in this case an NCOs obligation to care for his soldiers) can be a strong pull factor that enforces employee retention.¹⁴⁸ This kind of obligation is exemplified by Chief Warrant Officer Robert Girouard, a veteran with 29 years of service who went to Afghanistan and was killed in action. According to his Commanding Officer, "he took care of his soldiers, and died doing it."¹⁴⁹ It is doubtful that he would have remained in the CF if his troops had not gone into battle. In fact, Girouard had intended to go to Afghanistan for one last tour and

¹⁴⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel Rob D. McIlroy, "Army Restructure: The Key To Making Managed Readiness Truly Work," *The Canadian Army Journal* Vol 9.2 (Summer 2006), 147-149. Note: Managed readiness depends on predictability. The programme was first introduced in 2001 under the title ATOF (Army Training and Operations Framework). This programme was disbanded because of a lack of task predictability and inadequate manpower planning considerations. The author of the cited article states that the managed readiness programme will likely suffer the same fate unless army manpower numbers are increased by 15%.

¹⁴⁸ Meyer and Allen, *Commitment in the Workplace...*, 61.

¹⁴⁹ Red Fridays Canada, "Eulogy of CWO Robert Girouard," http://www.redfridays.ca/memorial/girouard_eulogy.html; Internet; accessed 17 March 2007.

then retire, so his decision demonstrates that his desire to look after his soldiers was a deeply felt obligation for him. From this perspective, it can be concluded that normative commitment will be a factor that will hold senior NCOs in the army.

6.1.3 Initiatives that Enhance Affective Commitment

Affective commitment refers to an employee's desire to remain working for an organization. Overwhelmingly, soldiers who stay in the army do so because they feel that they are making a contribution to something bigger than themselves. Another is army life satisfies their desire to excel in something that is difficult. Equally important is the social aspect of their lives. When people work together in difficult circumstances, they develop a kinship with each other that transcends a mere working relationship to become comradeship. Over the last few years, the resurgence of the warrior ethos in the Canadian Forces has been done more to enhance affective commitment amongst CF soldiers than at any time since 1990. This resurgence comes from Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.

Soldiers are the type of people who relish a challenge. This is why they join, and for those who decide to remain with the Forces, this is why they stay in. The fighting that is going on in Afghanistan has actually been a boon to soldier morale. To work in an operational theatre is something that is challenging, and puts to the test the many years of training and hard work that is a soldier's lot in life. However, it is certain that Canada's commitment to Afghanistan will end at some time in the future. What is important when this happens is that the withdrawal is tied to how valuable the army's work was while there. The Canadian army cannot afford another Somalia, where the entire CF was tainted by the actions of a few miscreants so that there was a feeling within Canadian

society that the military way of life was not an honourable life choice. Soldiers are affected by these sentiments, which causes commitment problems and reduced retention.

The challenge that a soldier gets from war fighting does not have to stop once Canada's involvement in Afghanistan is over. While war fighting is the greatest test for a soldier, they can still be given realistic and difficult training that provides intrinsic motivation. Until recently, this has been a failing for the Canadian Army, which sacrificed high quality training opportunities during the lean years in order to satisfy other priorities. For example, in the late 1990s pay raises were funded out of operations budgets, leading to Canadian soldiers being eventually well paid but poorly trained and motivated.¹⁵⁰ Soldiers must have a good pay package, but they recognize that an army must train hard to be credible. Good training and meaningful work produces intrinsic motivation that far outweighs that which is gained by pay raises alone.

The CF has made recent training improvements by establishing Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre in Wainwright, Alberta. This camp provides advanced level training in preparation for deployments, but it is hoped that this kind of training will continue when the deployments to Afghanistan have ended. Furthermore, the training centre has made inroads towards increasing the role of senior NCOs in the design and

¹⁵⁰ Department of National Defence, "Defence Highlights: Budget 1999 and 2000," http://www.dnd.ca/hr/scondva/engraph/cdsscondva_e.asp?cat=1; Internet; accessed 14 April, 2007. See also Department of National Defence, "Speaking Notes for General Maurice Baril: Appearance Before SCONDVA," http://www.dnd.ca/hr/scondva/engraph/cdsscondva_e.asp?cat=1; Internet; accessed 14 April 2007. Note: 1999 saw the first large pay increases for the CF since 1991, yet the funding increase that the government assigned to affect the pay and QoL increases fell well short of the amount needed. The CDS, General Baril, referred in his speech to SCONDVA that a "redistribution" of funds from the operations, equipment and training budgets was required to fund these improvements. He went on to say that the CF could not continue to do this as it would have grave consequences for CF readiness and morale. Later, in November of 1999, the government increased the CF budget by \$184 Million, suggesting the shortfall was at least this much.

delivery of NCM training; a task formerly completed mainly by officers.¹⁵¹ This new responsibility, combined with the proposed incorporation of senior NCOs into brigade level operational planning scenarios, will help to increase the level of input that these experienced soldiers will have in the army of tomorrow. To keep motivation and commitment at a high level, the Army must continue with these efforts. However, these initiatives are new and under development and will do nothing to retain the senior NCOs of today.

One of the most important parts of affective commitment comes from the recognition that the public gives to a soldier's service. There have been some important recent initiatives in this regard that can have a great effect on affective commitment. It is largely not known by the Canadian public that there were several times during the 1990s when Canadian soldiers were engaged in pitched battles in the Former Yugoslavia.¹⁵² In 2002, the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry received the Commander in Chief's Unit Commendation from the Governor General. The same award was also presented to the 1st Battalion, Royal 22^e Regiment during the same year. This commendation was presented to these units for exemplary heroism and devotion to duty; the problem was that the award was for action that took place nine or ten years before.¹⁵³ This kind of recognition is important but it is not acceptable that the government and the army should recognize this kind of meritorious service ten years after the fact. What

¹⁵¹ Colonel M.P. Jorgensen and Chief Warrant Officer L.A. Topp, "The CTC Perspective on Individual Training Modernization," *The Canadian Army Journal Vol 9.2* (Summer 2006), 14.

¹⁵² Off, *The Ghosts of the Medak Pocket...*, 234.

¹⁵³ Department of National Defence, "Soldiers Honoured for Professionalism, Courage, Selflessness," http://www.armee.forces.gc.ca/lf/English/6_1_1.asp?id=178; Internet; accessed 21 March 2007.

makes this worse is that these awards were not initiated by the senior leaders of the CF, but by a departmental Board of Inquiry (BoI) that was investigating rampant post-traumatic stress injuries amongst the soldiers who had taken part. As the BoI recommended:

Recognizing the courage and commitment of the soldiers who participated in Op HARMONY will help the injured heal. Even today, many Canadians are unaware of what the peacekeepers accomplished in Croatia, or the terrible conditions they endured.¹⁵⁴

The commendation does a lot to correct the wrongs of that period, but this kind of recognition is important and must continue.

Similarly, individual Canadian troops accomplished acts of valour consistent with the highest traditions of military service. Yet, even though Canada deployed more than 40,000 troops to the Balkans over a period of more than ten years, not one military valour decoration was awarded to a Canadian soldier.¹⁵⁵ Things did not improve substantially during the first deployment to Afghanistan in 2001. Although Canadian soldiers were decorated for valour several times, the decorations were awarded by the United States, not Canada.¹⁵⁶ Awarding valorous acts is something that will have a great effect on morale and commitment amongst soldiers. The award of a medal to one or two soldiers

¹⁵⁴ Government of Canada, *Croatia Board of Inquiry: Executive Summary...*, (n.p.).

¹⁵⁵ Christopher McCreery, *The Canadian Honours System* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2005), 156-165. Note: The Canadian Honours System is divided into several different kinds of honours and awards. The types of awards that can be awarded to soldiers are: long service awards, campaign medals, and honours. Honour awards are further sub-divided into valour decorations, and decorations for meritorious service. As a result of actions in the Former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, all soldiers who took part received campaign medals and several awards were presented for “meritorious service.” However, not one military valour award was given to any soldier, despite the very intense battle conditions experienced during Op HARMONY, and Op APOLLO.

¹⁵⁶ Government of Canada, *Canada Gazette, Vol. 137, No. 45, Part I* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 8 November, 2003), 3484-3485. Note: Thirty-one Canadian Forces soldiers received the Bronze Star medal from the United States for valour in action in Afghanistan. Not one Canadian valour decoration was awarded until 2006 (see note 152).

has a great effect over every other member of the Forces. The others will feel that their people and their government appreciate all of their efforts, great and small. Since 2005, the Canadian government has made great strides in this regard. In recognition of their bravery in battle, the Star of Military Valour and the Medal of Military Valour were awarded for the first time since the creation of these Canadian valour awards in 1993.¹⁵⁷ This is much more effective for morale than was the record of the previous ten years, when nothing greater than meritorious service decorations were given out to soldiers who had acted bravely while under fire.¹⁵⁸ Recognition is an important part of retaining soldiers.

In summary, some measures have been introduced to increase the level of commitment amongst Canada's senior NCO corps. In the realm of continuance commitment, the assessment shows that the pension improvements that have been introduced will not improve the chances that these soldiers will remain. Normative commitment, influenced by formal courses and feelings of obligation to the troops, will have a mixed effect. Senior NCO commitment will not be affected by the new professional development courses that are being introduced because there is limited time for them to take part in the programmes. On the other hand, the war in Afghanistan will be a strong pull factor for these soldiers because they have strong obligations to the welfare of their troops. Lastly, the fact that many of these soldiers are finally able to put

¹⁵⁷ Department of National Defence, "Four Stories of Valour," http://www.army.forces.gc.ca/lfwa/feature_valour_stories.htm; Internet; accessed 21 March 2007. Note: Since this story ran, the Star of Military Valour was awarded again (for a total of two awards). The Medal of Military Valour has been awarded six times.

¹⁵⁸ While Meritorious Service Decorations are high awards that recognize a soldier's exemplary service, they do not recognize brave actions in the face of the enemy. Merit is not the same as valour, and the government of Canada should recognize military valour with a decoration that is appropriate. The award of a merit decoration for a valorous act seems to suggest that valour in battle is not a worthy trait.

their hard won skills into practice is a strong influence on their commitment to the CF, and the recognition they are now receiving from their government and the public is of equal importance. From these factors it can be deduced that commitment has positively influenced army senior NCO retention.

6.2 Recent Leadership Initiatives

As part of its retention programme, the CF has indicated that leadership at all levels is of crucial importance to keeping people in the army. This strategy coincides well with the retention model, which ties the quality of the CF senior leadership directly to soldier retention. Lately the CF has made very strong leadership improvements that may pay dividends for CF retention. For example, the army has done very well by the last two Chiefs of Defence Staff. General Ray Henault, who served between 2001 and 2005, was instrumental in many of the reforms that are now in the definition stage.¹⁵⁹ He was followed by the charismatic General Rick Hillier, who has continued where Henault began.

To say that the CF was lucky to have these two men as CDS is an understatement. As one would expect, both have done a fine job with administering the forces. That said, their main strength has been in their ability to engage the public. Each has made it their mission to increase the involvement and interest that Canadians have in military affairs. General Henault improved communication between the armed forces and the government and his efforts had much to do with turning around the fiscal problems that were gripping

¹⁵⁹ Canadian Broadcasting Company News, "Chief Military Advisor – General Ray Henault," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/nato/chiefmilitaryadviser.html>; Internet; accessed 20 March 2007.

the CF since the end of the Cold War.¹⁶⁰ Though a quiet gentleman, he was popular with the troops. He visited soldiers three times during the first deployment to Afghanistan and even made an effort to share their risks by going on patrol with soldiers on Christmas day 2003.¹⁶¹ Hillier has also been very effective at engaging with the Canadian public. The rank and file have great respect for him, both for his frank talk and for his intelligent use of public opinion to influence government policies on defence.¹⁶² The result of the work done by these gentlemen has been an increase in the level of public interest in defence matters.

Canadians have never had much interest in the military. Public apathy has a great impact on members of the army, especially if they are engaged in combat on behalf of a public that apparently neither cares for them or the battles they have fought in. This has all changed since Generals Hillier and Henault became CDS. The stock of the Canadian Forces has gone up in the eyes of the public and this has been good for soldiers.¹⁶³ Solid public opinion, government support, and positive media coverage have all done wonders for making soldiers feel that what they are doing is important in the eyes of Canadians. Recall that the CF Retention Model proposes that senior leadership has a direct influence

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Paul Manson, "The Hillier Factor," in *The Conference of Defence Association Commentary 10-2006*, (Ottawa: Conference on Defence Associations, 2006), (n.p.) [Commentary on-line]; available from; http://www.cda-cdai.ca/CDA_Commentary/CDA%20Commentary%2010-06%20Manson-The%20Hillier%20Factor.pdf; Internet; Accessed 29 March 2007.

¹⁶³ Note: Throughout 2006, several polls were conducted regarding support for the Afghanistan mission and support for the troops. While support for the mission has varied with events, support for the troops has remained high throughout. As this article espouses, the Canadian public has invariably felt that our soldiers have been doing honourable work, and deserve public support. If Generals Henault and Hillier had prosecuted their public awareness campaigns with the lack of transparency that was common practice in the mid-1990s, public support for the troops would not be as prevalent.

on retention success or failure.¹⁶⁴ For this reason, this positive leadership at the highest level is an excellent way to increase the motivation of soldiers. This must have a positive effect of retention.

From the above discussion it is evident that the CF has done much to improve leadership. However, studies show that army leadership at the lower levels still has a long way to go before real improvements are realized. Branch-level leadership remains problematic, causing soldiers to feel that the officers who control the development of their trades are disconnected from the rank and file and the long-range vision of the CF.¹⁶⁵ More importantly, soldiers still feel that they have limited say in either how their careers will progress or how their units are run.¹⁶⁶ These factors have made the level of commitment that soldiers have for the army very fragile. In summary, while leadership has been improving in the CF, it would not take much of a reverse to cause senior NCOs to rethink their intention to stay or to go.

6.3 Recent QoL Initiatives

Previous parts of this essay revealed that QoL initiatives have an indirect effect on retention. To improve retention, the CF retention strategy states that QoL issues must work towards making the CF an employer of choice. As was discussed in the retention model, QoL efforts will influence job satisfaction and the intention to stay in the forces.

¹⁶⁴ Villeneuve et al, *Buying Low Attrition...*, 25.

¹⁶⁵ Capstick et al., *Canada's Soldiers...*, 49-50. See also: Sean Norton, *The Department Of National Defence And Canadian Forces "Your-Say" Survey: Methodology And Preliminary Findings* (Ottawa: Directorate of Human Resources Research and Evaluation, 2004), (n.p.).

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

The CF has done what it can to arrest QoL problems, and real improvements have been made to some benefits that will improve commitment amongst senior NCOs. This section will discuss some major QoL initiatives that have been undertaken in the last few years as part of the overall retention effort.

One QoL factor that has seen some improvement is the aspect of military pay. The reader will remember from the retention model that pay is a continuance commitment issue that has a direct influence on soldier turnover intentions. CF pay has seen great improvements since 1998, yet it remains one benefit that is looked at with great cynicism. For example, the pay package still receives much criticism from the rank and file because of the impression that pay increases barely keep up with the rate of inflation.¹⁶⁷ However, a detailed analysis proves that this assumption is false. Figure 6-2 shows that since 1998, CF pay increases have been matching the historical inflation rate in most cases. Therefore, some of the criticism that is made about pay is unfounded and these falsehoods only serve to spread discontent and low morale. The CF has worked to provide more information about pay, but when viewed against the results of various surveys these efforts have been less than successful. The CF leadership must improve education about the pay programme in order to bring to light the positive impact of this particular aspect of QoL.

¹⁶⁷ Mapleleafweb, "The State of the Canadian Military: How Strong, How Proud?," <http://mapleleafweb.com/features/military/state/life.html>; Internet; Accessed 27 March 2006. Note: Many of the exit surveys have complaints that pay does not keep pace with the cost of living. Continuous remarks were made by CF members that for every pay increase, there was a concurrent increase in Private Married Quarter rent costs that was nearly the same amount as their gross pay increase. See: Government of Canada, "SCONDVA Transcripts: Tuesday 28 January 1998," http://www.forces.gc.ca/hr/scondva/engraph/270198_e.asp; Internet; accessed 23 April 2007.

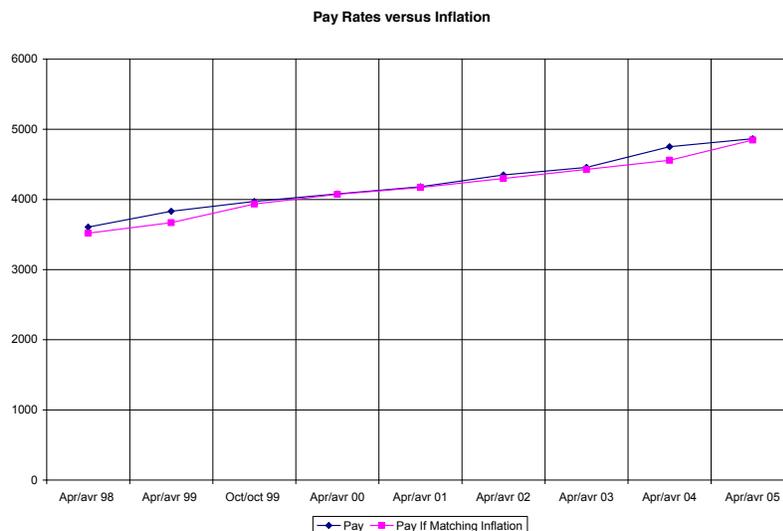


Figure 6-1 Military Pay versus the Rate of Inflation
Source: DCBA and Government of Canada, “Canada’s Economy”¹⁶⁸

Nonetheless, criticism of the pay programme does not end here. There are complaints that pay increases are not raises at all. CF members feel that they should get a pay increase that matches their increase in workload.¹⁶⁹ This is something that is constantly reviewed, but it occurs largely in the background. Military pay is tied to civil service pay structures and all pay raises are based on negotiations with Treasury Board and in conjunction with public service collective agreements. However, though largely powerless to affect change regarding basic pay, the CF leadership has made other inroads to improve other financial benefits. For example, soldiers who serve in dangerous theatres like Afghanistan now have tax-free status. This benefit was designed to

¹⁶⁸ Department of National Defence, “Direct General Compensation and Benefits,” http://www.dnd.ca/dgcb/dppd/pay/engraph/204.30_e.asp?sidesection=3&sidecat=28&period=C&key=SERGEANT; Internet; accessed 20 March 2007. See also Government of Canada, “Canada’s Economy,” <http://www.canadianeconomy.gc.ca/english/economy/inflation.cfm>). Note: These figures are based on the historic rates of pay for a Sergeant at the maximum incentive pay level as compared to the historic annual rate of inflation.

¹⁶⁹ Craig Dowden, *Quality of Life in the Canadian Forces: Satisfaction with Initiatives*, (Ottawa: Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation, 2001), 35.

encourage the desire to serve in a special duty area (conflict zone). When combined with the risk pay that a soldier receives while deployed, this equates to a pay increase of more than \$40,000 after a six month tour.¹⁷⁰ These are financial benefits that help to make deployments and time away less of a burden for soldiers.

Another major QoL improvement effort has been aimed at individual PERSTEMPO. The retention model places demands like PERSTEMPO against job satisfaction, which indirectly affects a soldier's turnover intentions. The army has been struggling with this problem for some time and has endeavoured to rectify the situation by pursuing a Managed Readiness Programme (MRP). This would help to make deployments more predictable, thereby giving soldiers a window on their future deployments that would help them to plan their lives. The programme is designed to work on a 36 month cycle. The first 24 month period is a lowered readiness state that is designed for rest and training. The last 12 months of the cycle is a high readiness cycle that is intended to be the liability period for operational deployments.¹⁷¹ The programme looks good in principle, but the army is too small to be able to manage the programme. Many soldiers end up being deployed during their 24 month "rest and training period." So despite the good intentions of the MRP, the army has not succeeded with this QoL initiative.

Other QoL programmes have shown great progress. During the 1990s, the army struggled to overcome several problems with soldier care and rehabilitation. This area of

¹⁷⁰ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation News, "Danger Pay," <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/afghanistan/canada-dangerpay.html>; Internet; Accessed 15 April 2007. See also: Department of National Defence, "Operations Allowance" *Compensation and Benefits Instructions, Chapter 10, Section 3*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 23 July 2003), 34-44.

¹⁷¹ Department of National Defence, "Chief of Land Staffs Speech to the Conference of Defence Associations," http://www.dnd.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=461; Internet; accessed; 16 March 2007.

QoL has been another source of great cynicism within the ranks of the army. This problem is typified by the poor care given to soldiers like Major Bruce Henwood, who lost both legs in the Former Yugoslavia and had to fight for care and compensation.¹⁷² Also indicative of this deficiency was the high rates of PTSD that was the result of the poor care that soldiers received after returning from their deployments to the Former Yugoslavia.¹⁷³

This failure is contrasted with the superb care that soldiers have received recently, all of which have been given extensive television and media coverage. Canadian soldiers receive world class care: first from a US Military Hospital in Landstuhl, Germany and then in Canada. Media coverage is full and positive, and has included CBC news coverage of double amputee Master Corporal Paul Franklin's efforts to rejoin his unit.¹⁷⁴ Canadian soldiers no longer feel that they will be forgotten and pushed aside if they are injured. If they are badly injured and are eventually medically released, they know that their families will be properly cared for. If the worst happens and they are killed, they know that their service to Canada will be honoured, as has been evident through the extensive media coverage which has occurred of late. All these things are very positive demonstrations of care for Canadian soldiers, and it is appreciated by those who serve the nation in uniform, and collectively this does a lot to overcome the problems of the past.

¹⁷² Department of National Defence, *SCONDVA - Interim Report - December 1 1999: Chapter 4 - The Injured, Retirees, and Veterans*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1999), (n.p.) http://www.dnd.ca/hr/scondva/engraph/12chap4_e.asp?cat=1&Chapter=4; Internet; accessed 7 April, 2007.

¹⁷³ Department of National Defence, *Croatia Board of Inquiry: Executive Summary...*, (n.p.).

¹⁷⁴ Katherine Harding, "Soldier Loses Two Legs, but Finds a Calling," *Globe and Mail*, 11 October 2006, (n.p.) [Newspaper on-line]; available from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20061011.wxamputee11/BNSStory/Afghanistan/home>; Internet; accessed 7 April 2007. Note: This story tells how Franklin wishes to help civilian amputees get information about care strategies. He feels that civilian amputees do not get the same access to information about alternative care strategies that he and other military amputees receive.

6.4 Summary of the Analysis

It is now necessary to assess if these initiatives have done enough to retain those senior NCOs that can leave the forces within the next few years. QoL remains either a source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, depending on the individual soldier's perspective. In this way, a soldier who feels a connection with the military will feel satisfied with the pay and benefits, whereas one who feels less connection will feel less satisfied. That said, even the most committed soldier feels that pay is inadequate to their workload, so this form of continuance commitment is indecisive. As was discussed in this chapter, pay dissatisfaction causes some senior NCOs to seek civilian employment, where he can make more money by combining the pay from his new job with his pension benefits. The main continuance commitment strategy, the new pension scheme, does not apply to current senior NCOs unless they decide to convert to the plan voluntarily. Therefore, this new continuance commitment strategy will not increase retention amongst this target population.

Regarding workload factors, OPTEMPO and PERSTEMPO continues to be a problem as the army struggles to implement the Managed Readiness Programme with too few soldiers to make the programme successful. Although the leadership has tried to impose order on chaos, unless there is an increase in strength or a reduction of tasks the programme will be unsuccessful. This remains a crucial factor to rectify, since so many other issues (time available for training, QoL, professional development, etc) hinge on making this programme work. This is why General Hillier has made recruiting such a high priority for the Army. Managed readiness is a laudable goal, but without increased strength, many senior NCOs will be drawn towards a more stable life.

The amelioration of CF leadership at the highest levels has borne fruit, producing an increased level of trust in the senior leadership. However, at the unit level much remains to be done regarding the change to a transformational leadership style that will increase senior NCO participation in the running of the army. Some initial steps have been taken, but it cannot be concluded that these steps will rectify long-standing problems overnight. Much cynicism remains regarding leadership at the unit level, as the various exit surveys attest. It is thus reasonable to conclude that despite the great work that has been done by the CDS, senior NCO retention might still be decided at the lower echelons.

Regarding affective and normative commitment, many improvements have been made. First, the main factor that will serve to improve retention results from the fact that senior NCOs are serving during a time of war. These soldiers are finally getting to do what they were trained to do, and the need to look after their subordinates will serve as a great pull factor that will keep them in the army. It is very important to realize just how great this factor is. Soldiers do not wish to be in a war any more than anyone else. What they relish is to be able to put their training to the test and do something of value in order to help others. Self actualization is important to any person's working life, and soldiers are no different. Finally, the normative commitment pull-factor that comes from a senior NCO's desire to look after their subordinates is an important aspect of retention. This author would be very interested to know if the normative influence as discussed in the CF Retention model would increase in time of war. While there is no data to suggest that this is true, it is this author's subjective assessment is that retention increases in wartime for this very reason. Perhaps this is an area that should be studied in the future.

Taking all of these factors into account, the CF Retention Model must be relied upon to make the final assessment as to the success or failure of recent retention efforts.

To review, the direct influences on turnover intentions are: the influence of senior leadership, continuance commitment, and organizational commitment. Based on the model's assessment of weight of influence, the senior leadership factor has the lowest effect on turnover. That said, it must be remembered that the model states that most of the influence in this realm comes from senior leadership. This leadership is the type that is responsible for the institutional vision that brings about collective feelings of value amongst the rank and file. Earlier in this chapter it was shown that there has been great improvements in this regard, which will serve as minor retention success. However, this area is fragile and can change quickly if strong transformational leadership does not continue.

According to the model, continuance commitment is the second strongest direct influence on turnover intentions. Earlier in this paper, it was demonstrated that senior NCOs often leave the forces to increase their income by combining civilian pay with their pension benefits. Recall also that the 20 years of service gate is the second highest attrition factor for all CF members. Unless there is an incentive to convert to the new pension scheme, the senior NCOs of today will not stay until 25 years of service. It is this author's assessment that some form of incentive may be required in order to ensure that the senior NCO ranks continue to be filled by the best people. Further, those who are capable of being promoted to replace those who do leave should also be considered for the same kind of incentive. This conclusion is confirmed by a CF HR policy paper that states retention bonuses may be required in circumstances where operational effectiveness

is potentially impacted.¹⁷⁵ Unless this is done, continuance commitment factors will not increase retention in any way.

A retention bonus is simply a short-term fix that will help the CF weather the upcoming demographic storm. As the CF retention model states, the greatest influence on turnover intentions comes from organizational commitment, which has a weight of influence that is 30 percent stronger than the other direct influences.¹⁷⁶ Recall that organizational commitment has two subsets; normative commitment and affective commitment. The earlier analysis shows that being in an army at war will increase the organizational commitment of any soldier, and senior NCOs who feel a distinct responsibility for their subordinates are likely to be influenced to a greater degree than their subordinates. For these reasons, it is this author's assessment that as long as Canada is deployed to Afghanistan, the retention of senior NCOs will remain high. However, this is contingent on the support of the Canadian people. If this public support is withdrawn, the kind of frustration and low morale that occurred after the deployments to Somalia and Croatia will occur again and attrition will certainly increase. Similarly, when the CF returns from Afghanistan, the nation must resist the temptation to cut military budgets too drastically. The Army must continue to train hard, both to prepare soldiers for the next war and to maintain soldier motivation and commitment at a high level. In summary, by using the deductions made in the CF retention model as a predictive basis for analysis, the conclusion can be made that senior NCOs will stay in the Army for as long as they see that the CF mission is important.

¹⁷⁵ Major D. Howe, *The Bonus Fix: The Role of retention Bonuses in the Canadian Forces and Policy Recommendations*, (Ottawa: DMEP-A/RT Report 2005-004, 18 April 2005), 72.

¹⁷⁶ Villeneuve *et al*, *Buying Low Attrition...*, 24-25.

7.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to postulate that in order to remain effective during this period of high paced operational tempo and rapid force expansion, the CF must make every effort to retain as many Army senior NCOs as is possible. Chapter 2 reviewed the experience that these soldiers bring to the CF: their extensive knowledge makes them valuable and credible mentors to a new generation of soldiers and leaders. Furthermore, these experienced soldiers have learned difficult lessons in Somalia, Haiti, and the Former Yugoslavia. Their operational acumen will serve as a foundation of experience in Afghanistan, so that the chances of future success in this difficult mission will be enhanced. Additionally, since leadership mistakes at lower unit levels can have both international and strategic consequences, it is doubly important to retain their experience so that the errors that occurred in Somalia will not be repeated elsewhere. The Army cannot afford to squander the experience that is resident within the senior NCO corps.

This paper reviewed the depth of the demographic problem facing the combat arms trades of the Army and argued that the HR decisions made in the 1990s, including reduced recruiting and the FRP, have resulted in a demographic problem of immense proportions. The CF and the Army are now faced with a demographic hole, whereby there are not enough experienced and qualified replacements for those senior NCOs who may leave the Forces. This problem is evident throughout the combat arms trades and the Army, forcing the CF to recognize that action had to be taken. Thus, the retention of experience will be the centre of gravity for future CF HR strategies.

The causes of senior NCO attrition were investigated in the next portion of the essay. Several factors were investigated, including OPSTEMPO, PERSTEMPO and QoL

issues. These things all serve as sources of dissatisfaction for senior NCOs, and although often cited by soldiers as the reasons for leaving the CF, these issues tend to mask the underlying causes of attrition. The main conclusion that was drawn from this chapter was that soldiers can endure almost any amount of workload and QoL dissatisfaction, but if they feel poorly led and have a lack of fulfilment from their jobs, they will not stay in the Army. Thus, it was concluded that the main push-factors for leaving the forces is the lack of professional opportunities, poor leadership, and reduced confidence caused by poor readiness and training. These many issues can be reduced to two main attrition foci: poor leadership and dropping levels of commitment.

If the CF were to deal with these issues, proper research would have been needed in order to devise appropriate strategies and programmes so that attrition can be prevented. The next chapter reviewed the historical development of retention modelling in the CF. The analysis showed that CF retention modelling was reactive and poorly conducted, which led to a lack of progress regarding retention strategies in the CF. Retention was clearly not a priority before the late 1990s, mainly because CF HR policies were still aligned with Cold War mentalities that focused on a regular turnover of personnel in a larger, more robust CF. This resulted in a HR culture that was focused on attrition rather than retention. All this changed as the 1990s came to a close. The pool of recruits was drying up, and the HR challenges that were facing the CF needed to be solved by retention as well as recruiting. The CF developed a comprehensive retention model, and then followed through with a retention based HR strategy. Programmes and methodologies have been introduced to put the strategy into action, leading to a well designed retention system to meet the CF HR needs of the future. But it still remained to be seen if these developments would serve to keep these senior NCOs in the Army.

The final chapter analyzed whether the current CF policies that have fallen out of the model and strategy will be adequate to retain these Army senior NCOs. The three direct influence factors as discussed in the CF retention model were used as the assessment tool. The paper showed that the new pension scheme, the main programme to enhance continuance commitment, will not cause any increased levels of retention amongst senior NCOs. The senior leadership influence factor has seen many great improvements in recent years. Although many senior NCOs still feel there are leadership problems at the lower levels, the positive leadership from the CDS, and indeed the support received from the people of Canada, will serve as a marginal draw that will increase senior NCO retention. This factor remains fragile, and can reverse quickly to become a push-factor if leadership is not handled properly in the years to come.

Lastly, the essay discussed the organizational commitment factors and their influence on senior NCO retention. These influences are drawn from normative commitment (the obligation to serve), and affective commitment (the desire to serve). Clearly, it is evident that senior NCOs feel a duty to remain with their units. As the CF continues its dangerous deployment to Afghanistan, senior NCOs feel that they ought to keep watch over their soldiers. Thus, continued service will remain a strong obligation as long as Canadian soldiers are in harms way.

The influence of affective commitment is equally strong. In Afghanistan, these senior NCOs are doing a difficult job and they are proving their skill in a way that can not be replicated in any exercise scenario. Equally, they see themselves as doing work that is vital because they are securing their own nation's interests while also helping the innocent people of Afghanistan. Doing important work is central to the fulfilment of a soldier. However, the Forces must remember that no retention programme will work if

soldiers feel that they are not being given the tools to do their job. When soldiers return from Afghanistan, either for a rest or permanently, the Army must continue to train hard for the future or risk a loss of soldier commitment. This essay concludes that these soldiers will likely remain in the CF. However, if the Army accepts a marginal role and training mediocrity, it is unlikely that the glue that holds the Army together will “stick it out.”

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