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BILINGUALISM: THE CAF'S ANGLOPHONE ATTRITION PROGRAM

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Exercise Solo Flight

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Above a certain rank, most federal bureaucrats (regardless of what province they work in) invariably hit a promotional glass ceiling unless they know French.

J.J McCullough, HuffPost Canada

Bilingualism: The CAF's Anglophone Attrition Program

INTRODUCTION

In July of 2006 Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) – Toronto published a technical report entitled, *Factors influencing career satisfaction and dissatisfaction in five groups of Land Force Lieutenant-Colonels: A targeted follow-up to the Army Climate and Culture Survey*, where the primary qualitative dissatisfier among Army Lieutenant-Colonels (LCol) was the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) second language requirements.¹ This study, as the title alludes, was commissioned and conducted in order to provide more clarity on satisfiers and dissatisfiers across the Army's LCol rank following the *Army Climate and Culture Survey*² in 2005.

The CAF, writ large, has struggled to meet the spirit and intent of Canada's *Official languages Act*³ since its introduction almost 50 years ago. According to various incremental inquiries by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (OCOL) the CAF, as recently as 2013,⁴ remains short of the established requirements within the Act. Yet, this seemingly perpetual shortfall has been accepted by the political and military leadership of the CAF for good reason; the CAF's primary mission under the *Canada First Defence Strategy* remains the defence of Canada.⁵ Thus, peripheral, competing requirements such as language that the CAF faces on a routine basis receive

¹ Donald R. McCreary and Defence R&D Canada, *Factors Influencing Career Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in Five Groups of Land Force Lieutenant-Colonels: A Targeted Follow-Up to the Army Climate and Culture Survey* (Toronto: Defence R&D Canada - Toronto,[2006]).

² M. D. Capstick and Canada. Dept. of National Defence., *Canada's Soldiers: Military Ethos and Canadian Values in the 21st Century: The Major Findings of the Army Climate and Culture Survey and the Army Socio-Cultural Survey* (Ottawa: Director-General Land Capability Development, Land Personnel Concepts and Policy, Dept. of National Defence,[2005]).

³ Government of Canada Justice Laws Website, "Official Languages Act," (accessed 3 May 2017)., <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/O-3.01/>

⁴ Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, "Audits," (accessed 3 May 2017)., <http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca/en/publications/audits/index>

⁵ Canada. Dept. of National Defence and Canada., *Canada First Defence Strategy* (Ottawa, Ont.: National Defence,[2008]).

little effort when mission priority is elsewhere. The same extrapolation can be argued when examining the second official language profiles of the Officers and Non-Commissioned Members that make up the CAF.

This paper will argue that the Official Language policies of the CAF significantly reduce the selection pool for officer promotion at successive ranks within the Canadian Army (Army). Prior to analyzing the factors for and against this position it is important to understand the origins of bilingualism in the CAF and some of the incremental steps in the evolution of the policies, rules and regulations associated with the CAF's inculcation of the *Official Languages Act* (OLA). Hence, this paper will commence with a brief background of the issues surrounding the CAF's adoption of Canada's OLA. This paper will utilize a combination of primary source documents and reports and the interviews of Regular Force Majors (Maj), LCol, and Colonels (Col) as captured by DRDC-Toronto⁶ and (then) LCol Luc Gaudet⁷ concerning the topic of bilingualism in the CAF to support its thesis. It will then analyze some of the findings of both the DRDC – Toronto report as well as portions of the Masters research paper of (then) LCol Gaudet, as previously introduced. The paper will then discuss the nuances associate with ratios of Anglophone versus Francophone population across Canada and how it relates to the Army in particular. This discussion will address the compounding issues that are present due to the physical geography of Canada as it pertains to the Army's distribution across the country. Finally, this paper will briefly explore the outcomes associated with the CAF's push for greater diversity through recruiting initiatives.

⁶ McCreary and Defence R&D Canada, *Factors Influencing Career Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in Five Groups of Land Force Lieutenant-Colonels: A Targeted Follow-Up to the Army Climate and Culture Survey*, Vol. 2006-088 (Toronto: Defence R&D Canada - Toronto, 2006).

⁷ Luc Gaudet, *Canadian Forces Leadership Effectiveness: Competing Values Perspectives on Bilingualism* (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary,[2011]).

BACKGROUND

Well before Canada officially became an independent country in 1867, its French – English cultural and linguistic foundations had been forged on the Plains of Abraham with the military victory of the British over the French. Within the year following the victory, French Canada had capitulated to the British thereby solidifying the identity of Canadian society and firmly instituting the ruling majority’s judicial and political systems.⁸ These pre-confederation outcomes significantly contributed to the culture, traditions and language of what would later become the Canadian military.

The CAF continued to conduct operations and administration primarily in English until the appointment of the first Francophone Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Victor Allard in 1966. General Allard was appointed by the then Minister of National Defence (MND), Paul Hellyer, following a mass exodus of some twenty-eight general officers, including three Lieutenant-Generals and seventy-nine other senior officers as Hellyer pushed toward unification. General Allard was willing to endorse unification, and even facilitate it, in exchange for his opportunity to impose bilingualism on the Canadian Forces.⁹ In the year following Allard’s appointment as CDS, Hellyer was replaced by Leo Cadieux, a French-Canadian, as the new MND, a change that solidified both unification and the bilingual shift of the CAF.¹⁰

On the heels of Allard’s initiatives, the Canadian government introduced and adopted the OLA in 1969. The primary purpose of the OLA, as defined on the

⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Battle of Quebec,” (accessed 4 May 2017)., <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Quebec-North-America-1759>

⁹ J. L. Granatstein, *Who Killed the Canadian Military?* (Toronto: HarperFlamingo Canada, 2004). 75-77.

¹⁰ Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, *French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Armed Forces, Vol I 1763-1969: The Fear of a Parallel Army* (Ottawa: Directorate of History, Dept. of National Defence,[1988a]).

Governmental website, is to “ensure respect for English and French and equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in federal institution.”¹¹ Over the years the CAF has evolved in its effort to meet the requirements of the OLA and its variations. Early attempts at implementing the OLA saw the designation of French, English and Bilingual Language Units (FLU, ELU and BLU respectively) and corresponding ratios of French to English speaking personnel, this effort was commonly referred to as the “Unit model.”¹² This model never achieved the French – English distribution that it intended during the 1970s and following a more refined, “executory” version of the OLA in 1988, the CAF moved toward a model of “Universal Approach” that “envisaged a CF in which all personnel were bilingual.”¹³ In the end, the CAF’s training system proved to have insufficient capacity to meet the training requirements of this approach and yet the CAF continued to place emphasis on bilingualism.¹⁴ This paper argues that this capacity shortfall significantly disadvantaged the Anglophone population within the CAF and limited their ability to fairly obtain the second language requirements for promotion.

The most recent iteration in the CAF’s endeavor to meet, at least in spirit, the requirements outlined in the OLA was introduced to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Official Languages in February 2007.¹⁵ On 1 April 2007 the Official Languages Program Transformation Model (OLPTM) was implemented across DND and

¹¹ Government of Canada Justice Laws Website, “Official Languages Act,” (accessed 3 May 2017), <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/O-3.01/page-1.html#h-2>

¹² Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, *French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Armed Forces, Vol II 1969-1987 Official Languages: National Defence's Response to the Federal Policy* (Ottawa: Directorate of History, Dept. of National Defence,[1988b]). 4-35.

¹³ Government of Canada, “Official Languages Program Transformation Model,” (accessed 5 May 2017), <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=official-languages-program-transformation-model/hnocfo7i>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Parliament of Canada, “Standing Committee on Official Languages, Evidence,” (accessed 5 May 2017), <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=e&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=1&DocId=2750254&File=0>

the CAF. The model had three main objectives: to ensure linguistically qualified personnel are assigned to the right place at the right time, to improve the official Languages Awareness and Education Program, and to establish a performance measurement system to monitor DND's provision of services and instruction as required by the OLA.¹⁶ This "functional approach" moves from the universal – the right person, at the right place, at the right time – career management philosophy to a "linguistically qualified person," at the right place, at the right time philosophy. This change significantly reduces the selection pool of qualified personnel available to conduct such jobs thereby reducing employment breadth and key career opportunities for potentially outstanding leaders that have a lack of access to, or difficulty in, learning a second or third language.

OLA IMPLIMENTATION FAILURES

Through each of the successive models, the CAF's failure to implement a fair and equitable solution for the bilingualism requirements of the OLA has not gone unnoticed by the Officers and NCMs that fill its ranks. In particular, the OCOL received multiple complaints from officers concerning the CAF's "universal approach" to bilingualism policy in 2001. The first complaint concerned discrimination against unilingual members that hindered their ability to be promoted to a higher rank and the second complaint alleged that the CAF did not offer Anglophones adequate and enough French language training. Ultimately, the OCOL investigated and did not find merit to the first complaint but did agree that appropriate acquisition and maintenance training was required to

¹⁶ Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, "Audit of the Language of Work at National Defence Headquarters – Follow-up," (accessed 5 May 2017), <http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/en/publications/audits/2011/audit-language-work-national-defence-headquarters-followup>

satisfy the second complaint. The CAF subsequently modified the policy later that year to make language training an operational priority.¹⁷

Unfortunately, the fact that the CAF mandated that second language training was to be considered an operational priority did nothing to actually change members' access to the language training they needed in order to progress. It seems, this policy change was not enforced or simply took a back seat to other, more pressing issues, such as the business of defense. Missions like Afghanistan were on the horizon and nothing received higher operational priority than the training, support or deployment on its successive rotations. Members posted to higher priority units like school-houses were, as a rule, not permitted to take time away from their primary function to attend training that could be done on one's own time. The access issues surrounding second language training continue to impede, delay, or outright prevent members of the CAF from achieving required language proficiency gateways toward promotion. The MND at the time, John McCallum, was quoted in an article by the National Post as saying, "The Canadian Forces' efforts to promote bilingualism are 'not acceptable' ... [and that] attitudes must change or people will lose out on promotions and pay raises."¹⁸ This statement solidifies that fact that the Forces, at the time, paid lip-service to their policies concerning access to and the conduct of adequate second language training. Most important here, as McCallum highlights, these same "attitudes" prevented top performers from attending language training as their services within units were deemed "too valuable" for the unit to absorb their short term absence. As a result available second language courses were filled by

¹⁷ Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, "Annual Report 2001 - 2002," (accessed 5 May 2017), http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/html/ar_ra_2001_02_e.php

¹⁸ "Ontario: Canadian Forces Failing to Promote Bilingualism: McCallum: National Edition." *National Post* 2003.

second-tier performers that units could afford to “let go” which enabled these individuals to end up on the top of promotion merit lists due to points received for abilities in their second language.

In an effort to learn from past mistakes and to help shape the Army’s culture for the future, the Canadian Army commissioned a survey to be conducted for the Director General – Land Capability Development in 2004. The aforementioned survey, entitled *Army Climate and Culture Survey*, found that “LCols appeared to be experiencing some of the highest levels of career dissatisfaction in the Land force”¹⁹ and one of the driving factors at that time were the “second language requirements.”²⁰ These results sparked an enormous amount of attention at the higher echelons within the larger CAF and, as such, DRDC was asked to conduct specific follow-up with the LCols of the Army. Their follow-up confirmed the issues that were raised during the survey and gave weight to dissatisfiers like “the [language] standard for promotion; [...]; difficulties, particularly for Anglophones, in obtaining second language proficiency; inequities faced by Francophones; [and,] difficulties in finding the time for training...”²¹

Dissatisfiers like the language standard, as an example, do create goals for some officers to strive toward, yet at the same time they stand as a reminder that once you’ve achieved your terminal second language competency your options for further progression come to an end. The cessation of progress for those not capable of obtaining established second language levels is a real issue; options post failure are either to remain stagnant in one’s career until you time expire or retire from military life. An individual could be the

¹⁹ McCreary and Defence R&D Canada, *Factors Influencing Career Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in Five Groups of Land Force Lieutenant-Colonels: A Targeted Follow-Up to the Army Climate and Culture Survey*, Vol. 2006-088 (Toronto: Defence R&D Canada - Toronto, 2006). iii.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 29.

absolute best officer, leader and military mind of his/her generation but their career ceases to exist if they cannot achieve established second language gateways. This holds true to today, even in the face of reduced recruiting and increased attrition rates across the Army and larger CAF. These dissatisfiers were gleaned under the conditions of the “universal approach” to bilingualism but, as shown above, similar issues continue to reduce the selection pool for officer promotion at successive ranks within the Army.

To compound the issues that the Department of National Defence (DND) and the CAF were experiencing with the “universal approach” to bilingualism, the OCOL conducted an audit of the Language of Work within National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) between November 2004 and June 2005. “The purpose of the audit was to determine whether DND and the [CAF] have succeeded in creating a work environment conducive to the use of English and French...”²² The audit found that “the work environment [was] not conducive to the use of French, and English dominate[d] even among French-speaking employees, who tend[ed] to use their second language in their daily work.” Resulting in part from these compounding issues DND and the CAF then developed and introduced the OLPTM in February 2007, as previously outlined. The Official Languages Commissioner, at the time, then appeared before the Standing Committee on Official Languages to comment on the CAF’s recent initiative concerning OLA adherence. He alluded to the fact that by and large the CAF’s recent move from a “universal approach” to the new “functional approach” policy concerning the OLA was itself another “admission of failure.”²³

²² Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, “Audit of the Language of Work at NDHQ – February 2006,” (accessed 5 May 2017)., http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/html/dnd_mdn_022006_e.php

²³ Parliament of Canada, “Standing Committee on Official Languages, Evidence, Thursday, March 1, 2007,” (accessed 6 May 2017).,

The issues surrounding or impacting the CAF as an institution that have led to the current “functional approach” or OLPTM have largely remained unchanged throughout its history. The audit on the Language of Work, mentioned above, was conducted to assess DND’s (including the CAF) functioning from a language and communication perspective under the old “universal approach” model, it confirmed that the language of work for the CAF was indeed English. This audit was conducted in the National Capital Region and focused on NDHQ and should have, in theory, demonstrated the organization’s ability to actually accomplish day-to-day tasks and work priorities in a bilingual environment, it did not. Fast forward almost a decade, to the research conducted by (then) LCol Gaudet for his Master’s Project entitled, “*Canadian Forces Leadership Effectiveness: Competing Values Perspective on Bilingualism*”²⁴ and English emerges once again as the language of work within the CAF. His analysis showed that “as important as the constitutional and societal imperatives are, it is English as the [CAF] language of work, and not bilingualism as an attribute for leadership, that prevails as the central driver for military effectiveness.”²⁵ Gaudet’s paper uses students of the Canadian Forces College to form his representative sampling so his results cannot be directly compared to those of the Audit on NDHQ conducted by the OCOL but there are other factors that enable and justify such a comparison. CFC is a bilingual institution charged with delivering training in both official languages, the bulk of its programs have requisite second language requirements and its student populace is relatively representative of the National French-English population ratios. In the end, language of work determinations

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=e&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=1&DocId=2766448&File=0>

²⁴ Gaudet, *Canadian Forces Leadership Effectiveness: Competing Values Perspectives on Bilingualism* (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary, 2011).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

should favor CFC as a learning environment, if nothing else, yet English prevailed. Such research creates questions with respect to the actual validity of the governmentally imposed second language requirements of the CAF and by inclusion, the Army. The fact that the language of work within NDHQ and the CFC is English, it follows that other bilingual military locations within and outside of the country would also conduct day-to-day work in English. This fact then highlights yet another obstacle that disables an individuals' ability to retain any level of French proficiency learned and thereby contributes to an overall reduction in the pool of officers for promotion.

Another obstacle to an individuals' ability to retain a learned second language is that the Canadian Army is geographically spread across the entirety of the country with its major bases in Gagetown, New Brunswick, Valcartier, Quebec, Petawawa, Ontario, Shilo, Manitoba, and Edmonton, Alberta. All of these areas are primarily English, with the exception of Valcartier which is primarily French and is also the home of 5 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group, approximately one-third of the Canadian Army's combat power. This geographic reality of the Canadian Army severely impedes individual Anglophone members' retention of their second language based on available posting options as they progress through their respective careers. While serving as the Official Languages Commissioner, Mr. Graham Fraser stated that, "often, officers took the mandatory training and then spent their careers in a unit where there were very few Francophones, in an Anglophone region."²⁶ He was, of course, making the same inference as to language retention issues. The converse, however, is true for individual

²⁶ Parliament of Canada, "Standing Committee on Official Languages, Evidence, Thursday, March 1, 2007," (accessed 6 May 2017)., <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=e&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=1&DocId=2766448&File=0>

Francophone members' retention of their second language given that the majority of available postings are outside of Quebec in either predominantly English communities and/or bilingual bases. This dichotomy clearly demonstrates the inequities with respect to second language retention between the Anglophone and Francophone groupings in the Army. Furthermore, this inequality illustrates how the selection pool for officer promotion is significantly reduced at successive ranks.

An interesting addition to the Canadian problem of geography, as it relates to the retention of second languages, is that of the current recruiting push to increase geographic and ethnic diversity across the CAF. The CAF's recruiting website attempts to lure in prospective, "diverse" individuals with the promise of "pay[ing] for [their] education and training."²⁷ What is does not tell them is that according to existing policies, they too will have to learn and become proficient in a second official language of Canada if they wish to progress in-line with their peers. There are no exceptions, no incentives for fluency in languages other than English or French and no alignment with military occupations that would benefit from multiple language capabilities, like Intelligence. It can be argued that when a Canadian immigrant looks at the leadership of the Canadian Armed Forces they do not see themselves, be it for sheer physical looks or language or cultural representations or a combination thereof, therefore they may not necessarily be compelled to join. Such are the reasons that recruiting amongst these diverse groups of Canadians is difficult. So difficult in fact that the CAF has had to lower its recruiting targets for visible minorities from 11.8 per cent to 5.3 per cent so as to avoid outside

²⁷ Government of Canada, "Life in the Forces," (accessed 6 May 2017)., <http://www.forces.ca/en/page/lifeintheforces-75>

departmental influence.²⁸ Thus, the antiquated policies of the CAF that have significantly reduced the current and previously serving officer selection pool for promotion within the Army can also be seen to significantly impede future diverse growth and exploitation of languages.

CONCLUSION

In order to gain an appreciation for some of the complexities surrounding the CAF's inculcation of the rules and regulations associated with the OLA, this paper started with a brief overview of the CAF's approaches. The highlights of the bilingualism models were presented, from the early focus on the "unit" model to the most comprehensive, and least resourced "universal approach," to the most recent "functional approach" or the Official Languages Program Transformation Model.

Ultimately, this paper argued that the Official Language policies of the CAF significantly reduced the selection pool for officer promotion at successive ranks within the Canadian Army (Army). First this paper argued that top performers were seen as "too valuable" to their units to attend formal language training which resulted in courses being filled by second-tier performers that then ended up on the top of promotion merit lists. Next the paper analyzed the CAF's and, by inclusion, the Army's failed implementation efforts concerning the OLA using the "universal approach" and OLPTM as a mechanism of bounding the analysis to a particular time period. Supporting evidence was drawn from both the DRDC – Toronto technical report and the Masters Project paper by (then) LCol Gaudet. This evidence demonstrated that the CAF's second language requirements were

²⁸ CBC News, "PTSD and danger among deterrents to visible minorities joining military," (accessed 6 May 2017), <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ptsd-and-danger-among-deterrents-to-visible-minorities-joining-military-1.2849647>

the largest, single most dissatisfier amongst Army LCol's and that English dominated the language of work for units and areas designated as bilingual. Furthermore, it was argued that geographic constraints severely hamper second language retention for Anglophone personnel while enriching it for their Francophone counterparts. Finally, this paper demonstrated the impact of the CAF's language policies on its ability to recruit geographically and ethnically diverse groups of Canadians. This is significant because such impacts can impede diversity in the future and the exploitation of languages necessary for the CAF to remain a global partner.

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