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Canadian Forces Transformation – A Bridge Too Far?

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Abstract

In early February 2005, the newly appointed Canadian Forces Chief of Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, seized an opportunity to use the release of the new Defence Policy Statement as the impetus for CF transformation. The new CF vision called for fundamental change throughout the CF and potentially DND. Transformation is a long, laborious process and the ability to measure its effectiveness is vital in determining if the desired change will take effect. Many blueprints for change exist, but for the purposes of this essay, Kotter's model was selected to assess the envisioned cultural and institutional transformation of the Canadian Forces. This paper will argue that the CF transformation process has stalled and is in jeopardy of regressing to the point of failure if an azimuth check is not done to realign the process.

The CDS and the Chief of Transformation (CT) designed the transformation campaign plan to create irreversible momentum to capture quick wins early in the process. Real world realities of the Afghanistan operation and the lack of CF resources have derailed the CF transformation process. An in-depth examination of CF transformation against Kotter's principles will reveal that CF transformation has stalled and is in jeopardy of regressing. It is recommended that an independent validation of CF transformation be conducted in order to ascertain if it is still feasible under current CF constraints.

There is no more delicate matter to take in hand, more dangerous to conduct, or more doubtful of success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

Machiavelli¹

Introduction

Change is never easy, and the process of transformation is often long and difficult. Generally, the word transformation evokes mixed feelings for those who must develop, implement, and accept the change process. This was the case nearly two years ago when senior leadership of the Canadian Forces (CF) were put on notice that, for the survival of the CF, transformation was long overdue.² Retired General Gordon Sullivan, the visionary mind that led the American Army through a previous transformation, understood the battle the CF was about to face: “transforming an organization is hard work because the leader and his or her team must do it...you will have to spend a lot of time communicating, clarifying, generating enthusiasm and listening.”³ Just as important, the team must be able to measure its effectiveness. This paper uses Kotter’s model to evaluate the effectiveness of the initial CF transformation process. Since Kotter’s model provides “an actionable, eight-step process (Appendix A) for implementing successful transformation” and the envisioned cultural and institutional

¹ Lewis D. Eigen and Jonathon P. Siegel, *The Manager’s Book of Quotations* (Rockville: The Quotation Corporation, 1989), 223.

² Hussey, MGen Paul, Commander Canadian Defence Academy, interviewed by the author, 26 September 2006, with permission. MGen Hussey was in attendance at the symposium held in Cornwall in February 2005 and reviewed his notes from the meeting.

³ Gordon R. Sullivan and Michael V. Harper, *Hope Is Not A Method* (New York: Random House, 1996), 53; Quote from Colin Powell in the beginning of the book, “ Gordon Sullivan is one of the Army’s most visionary leaders. His insights into leadership and human behavior are truly profound. His experience transforming the Army is a powerful story-one from which leaders in all walks of life can learn.”

transformation of the CF falls within the category of major change; using Kotter makes the most sense.⁴

In early February 2005, the newly appointed Canadian Forces Chief of Defence Staff, General Rick Hillier, seized an opportunity to use the release of the new Defence Policy Statement as the impetus for CF transformation.⁵ The minority Liberal government of the day soon selected Hillier to lead the CF through a massive transformation. In his support, the Minister of National Defence (MND) Bill Graham stated unequivocally: “I have complete confidence in his ability to shape and implement Canadian Forces transformation.”⁶ The outgoing CDS, General Ray Henault, both acknowledged and endorsed the government’s decision: “I congratulate him on his appointment and will hand over to him with the full knowledge that he will lead the Canadian Forces through the transformation process required to maintain its relevance, responsiveness, and effectiveness well into the future.”⁷ Twenty months later, the transformation initiative started by General Hillier is still underway. But is it moving forward? While still early in the process, it is worthwhile to take a moment to reflect on the progress to date and evaluate whether the conditions for success have been set to allow for a complete transformation of the CF to occur. Using Kotter’s eight principles as a blueprint for successful change, this paper will argue that the CF transformation

⁴ John Kotter, “John Kotter Biography,” <http://www.johnkotter.com/bio.html>; Internet; accessed 28 September 2006; John Kotter, telephone conversation with author of the book “*Leading Change*”, 02 October 2006. Professor Kotter confirmed that his eight stage model was an acceptable blueprint to gauge the institutional and cultural change of the Canadian Forces, and cited that it has been used by nations such as China, Australia and throughout Europe and over the last ten years different departments of the Department of Defence has used it in the United States, most recently, the United States Navy. It is acknowledged that several models for transformation exist and many models were examined. Kotter’s model was selected because it best supported the aim of the paper.

⁵ The International Policy Statement was released in April 2005.

⁶ Department of National Defence/Canadian Forces, News Room Archives, “Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier appointed new Chief of the Defence Staff,” http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp; Internet; accessed 19 September 2006.

⁷ *Ibid.*.

process has stalled and is in jeopardy of regressing to the point of failure if an azimuth check is not done to realign the process.

By way of introduction this paper will examine Kotter's model in general terms. It will then review CF transformation including the new CF vision, the four phases of transformation, the CDS's six fundamental transformation principles and the desired end state. The next segment will present Kotter's eight stages, in detail, in order to evaluate the progress of the CF transformation process and to determine if the process is on track. The paper will conclude with a holistic analysis of Kotter's model against CF transformation and will illustrate that CF transformation has stalled and is in critical need of refocusing and rejuvenation to prevent a potential downward spiral.

Kotter's Blueprint for Change

John P. Kotter, a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University, has been a professor at the Harvard Business School for over twenty-six years. He has written several articles and books on leadership and the transformation process. In 1996, Kotter authored

imposed time constraints that encourage people to skip certain stages lead to critical errors and, eventually, catastrophic failure.¹⁰ In addition to successfully following all eight stages, Kotter believes there is one last ingredient required to effect successful change and that is leadership. “Leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen.”¹¹ With this in mind, let us turn now to the commencement of the CF transformation journey and begin to view transformation through Kotter’s lens.

Overview of CF Transformation

Less than two weeks into Gen Hillier’s tenure as CDS, he held a meeting with the senior CF leadership in Cornwall, Ontario (16-17 Feb 2005) to discuss transformation and the way ahead. One month later, he issued a planning guidance in which he stated, “The foundation of the new Defence Policy Statement is a new vision for the CF. This vision will call for fundamental change throughout the CF and potentially DND. I intend to engage personally in this implementation of the CF vision.”¹² The new CF vision called for the CF to become more effective, relevant and responsive to the contemporary operating environment at home and abroad. Effectiveness would increase by integrating maritime, land, air and special operations forces. Relevance would increase by adapting CF capabilities to be reflective of the new asymmetric threat vice the cold war era. Finally, enhanced responsiveness would result in quicker response times to domestic and international crises. Transformation would focus on the integration of joint organizations

¹⁰ Kotter, *Leading Change...*, 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹² General Rick Hillier, *CDS Planning Guidance – CDS Action Teams* (National Defence Headquarters, 10 March 2005).

and structures, develop one unified national command and control system (institutional transformation) and, most significantly, the CF would move beyond traditional ways of thinking and adopt a unified approach to operations (cultural transformation).¹³

Gen Hillier produced six key principles to speak directly to CF transformation and provide guidance to commanders and staffs in their execution of transformation activities.

These six principles are omnipresent throughout the CF:

- Canadian Forces Culture: transition from environmental cultures to a CF culture;
- Command Centric: transition from a st

- Alignment of enabling functions and organizations; and,
- Force generation re-design.¹⁵

In theory, upon completion of these phases, CF transformation will achieve the envisioned end state: “A CF that is strategically relevant, operationally responsive and tactically decisive, supported by an effective, efficient, and adaptable defence institution; capable of operating within a dynamic and evolving security spectrum.”¹⁶ With the end state in mind, it is time to begin the analysis of CF transformation against Kotter’s model.

Stage One: Establishing a Sense of Urgency

The first stage of the transformation process is critical to the successful implementation of the subsequent stages. If executed improperly, it can sabotage the process before it is even set in motion. Kotter argues that creating a sense of urgency provides the momentum necessary to combat the number one enemy of change: complacency. Several factors cause complacency ranging from an absence of a major crisis, to organizational structures that focus employees on narrow functional goals, to the strongest factor; organizational attitudes resulting in the *why change it, if it is not broken* mentality.¹⁷ Living off past successes can reduce the sense of urgency required to deal with contemporary and future problems. Organizations often become inward looking and this insular viewpoint manifests itself in cultural problems and arrogant mindsets.¹⁸ The

¹⁵ Gen Rick Hillier, *CDS Transformation Sitrep 02/05...*

¹⁶ Gen Rick Hillier, *CDS Planning Guidance – CF Transformation* (National Defence Headquarters: file 1950-9 (CT), October 2005.)

¹⁷ Kotter, *Leading Change...*, 36-40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

question to consider throughout the entire transformation process is *how does one breakdown the barriers that obstruct the transformation process from evolving?*

Kotter asserts that the secret to transformation is a strong, bold leader whose aggressive actions create a sense of urgency. Newly appointed leaders are often able to introduce a new vision without having to defend past actions. It is important to recognize that, in the beginning, these bold moves will likely cause angst throughout the organization, but this is unavoidable and creates the sense of urgency required to kick start transformation. Kotter describes nine ways to raise the urgency level in an organization:

- Create a crisis;
- Eliminate excess;
- Set goals that can not be reached within the current structure;
- Expand accountability to include broad based concepts;
- Provide up to date feedback;
- Insist on honest communication (eliminate the “yes man” mentality);
- Consult outside expertise to evaluate the process;
- Communicate the vision to all levels of the organization; and
- Continuously discuss the possibilities for the future.¹⁹

Undeniably, there are many courses of action available to create the mandatory sense of urgency required to initiate a major transformation. Nevertheless the fact remains that, even with all of these choices, the ability to produce the desired atmosphere is a

¹⁹ Kotter, *Leading Change...*, 43.

herculean task. In the spring of 2005, the dilemma facing Gen Hillier was how to create a sense of urgency?

With less than two weeks under his belt as the CDS, Gen Hillier met with his senior leadership for one purpose: to kick-start the transformation process by creating a sense of urgency throughout the CF. Those present received notice that the CF had to make a choice to transform in order to avoid crumbling into irrelevance. The security environment had changed and so must the CF. This new contemporary operating environment was plagued with asymmetric threats or, as the CDS liked to call them, a “ball of snakes”.²⁰ He argued that even though the Cold War had ended over fifteen years ago, the CF still mirrored a Cold War organization, thus rendering itself ineffective, unresponsive and irrelevant to contemporary operations. Gen Hillier pointed out that for the first time in a long time, the government was supportive of the military, and it was time to seize the initiative and act while the iron was hot. He informed his leadership team upfront that he wanted to create an irreversible momentum for transformation and was certain that the CF was capable of major change.²¹

One could argue that Kotter would conclude that Hillier’s decision to act quickly after his appointment as CDS allowed him to create the sense of urgency required in stage one to begin the transformation process. He created a crisis for the senior leadership to deal with: transform the CF or crumble into irrelevance. He painted a graphic visual picture of today’s asymmetric threat and the CF’s inability to counter that

²⁰ Hillier, Gen Rick, Chief of Defence Staff, *Transcript of Speech given to the Royal Canadian Military Institute*, Toronto, Ontario, 22 July 2005. “We have gone from the Warsaw Pact type of state player that threatens us to a ball of snakes.”

²¹ Hussey, MGen Paul, Commander Canadian Defence Academy, interviewed by the author, 26 September 2006, with permission. MGen Hussey was in attendance at the symposium held in Cornwall in February 2005 and reviewed his notes from the meeting and relayed the sense of crisis that the CDS felt the CF was facing.

threat effectively without widespread transformation. The sense of urgency ignited a transformation spark but the selection of the guiding coalition would determine if that spark would become a flame.

Stage Two: Creating the Guiding Coalition

Kotter insists that a strong guiding coalition is the backbone of a successful transformation. Further, he believes that the team must have the right composition, shared trust and common goals to carry transformation forward. Kotter opines that transformations are often associated with one larger than life personality who is highly visible; however, he maintains the key to success is building a solid team. The team must have position power, expertise, credibility and sound leadership in order to create a vision, communicate that vision, generate short-term wins and affix the new approach into the culture. Essentially, it must have the ability to make change happen no matter what obstacles are encountered along the way and it must remain dominant throughout the entire transformation process.²² Did the CDS assemble the right guiding coalition to implement CF transformation?

On 10 March 2005, the CDS released his guidance for the development of the CDS Action Teams (CAT). Hillier's intent was clear, "I intend to rapidly initiate the CF transformation planning process by forming Action Teams...led by general/flag officers. These Action Teams will investigate command and control, force generation, operational capability and institutional alignment, in order to initiate implementation of the new CF

²² Kotter, *Leading Change...*, 51-65.

vision.”²³ His guidance was articulate and to the point. The CAT had until June 2005 to deliver near and mid-to-longer term recommendations to the Armed Forces Council (AFC) and the General and Flag Officer Symposium. The CDS directed the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff (VCDS) to ensure that the CAT had all the resources necessary to execute their orders and that the entire CF organization understood the work of the CAT was the highest force development priority. The composition of the teams included personnel from all three environments plus civilians with varied backgrounds and skill sets. Upon completion of their recommendations, the CAT would hand over to the Canadian Forces Transformation Team (CFTT) which would implement the approved recommendations and synchronize all transformation activities.²⁴

Based on the criteria articulated by Kotter in stage two of creating change, a preliminary analysis reveals that Gen Hillier used the momentum he created in February to quickly develop a strong guiding coalition to plan the CF transformation process. He set the conditions for success by personally selecting those who would lead each team and issued challenging timelines to combat complacency long before it had the opportunity to set in. Upon completion of the CAT work, he appointed MGen Natynczyk as the Chief of Transformation (CT).²⁵ During that timeframe, talk of transformation and the CFTT work resonated throughout the CF. If the analysis were to stop there, it would appear that Gen Hillier was two for two in creating lasting change according to Kotter’s blueprint. But the guiding coalition must be pervasive throughout the entire transformation process, not just for the short term wins and this has not been the case.

²³ Gen Rick Hillier, *CDS Planning Guidance – CDS Action Teams* (National Defence Headquarters: 10 March 2005.)

²⁴ Gen Rick Hillier, *CDS Planning...* March 2005.

²⁵ Gen Rick Hillier, *CDS Planning Guidance – CF Transformation* (National Defence Headquarters: October 2005.)

In February 2006, the CF's focus shifted from transformation to the stand up of the operational commands, the Strategic Joint Staff (SJS) and the evolving counter-insurgency operation in Afghanistan. The latter became the CF's highest priority. The shift in priorities and the scarcity of resources resulted in the CFTT being stripped of key personnel to fill demands within the new commands and to support ongoing operations.²⁶ Real world imperatives created a different type of urgency within the CF which forced transformation to take a backseat to the Afghanistan mission. This mission has created an almost total pre-occupation among the CF leadership because it involves troops in combat and casualties have become a Canadian reality.²⁷

MGen Hincke, Chief of Programmes, describes transformation using an operational analogy. The CF chose to implement transformation on multiple fronts and as it progressed down these paths the system began to run out of resources to support all the initiatives without having reached the point of achieving success. Currently, there are over four hundred offsets that need to be identified to meet the requirements of the new operational commands.²⁸ The guiding coalition was drastically reduced to support higher priorities and the remaining cadre has not been as prominent or as focused on the remainder of the transformation process. In fact, the last set of minutes posted on the Transformation Website from the transformation steering group was on 07 December 2005.²⁹ CDS Sitrep 4 reveals direction from the CDS to the CT and the Chief of Defence

²⁶ Hincke, MGen Joe, Chief of Programmes, interviewed by the author, 17 October 2006, with permission. MGen Hncke works for the VCDS and the Directorate of Transformation report to him. MGen Hincke has been involved with the transformation process since its inception.

²⁷ CBC website, "Canadian Killed in Afghanistan was Based in Petawawa," <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2006/10/07/afghan-killed.html>; Internet; assessed 08 October 2006. As of 08 October 2006, forty Canadian soldiers have died in Afghanistan.

²⁸ Hincke, Chief of Programmes, . . . , 17 October 2006.

²⁹ Canadian Forces Transformation, "*From Vision to Mission.*" http://www.cds.forces.gc.ca/cft-tfc/pubs/documents_e.asp; Internet; accessed 15 September 2006.

Institutional Alignment (CDIA) to transfer all transformation duties as of 01 June 2006 to one of the busiest groups within the CF, the VCDS Group.³⁰ Since the beginning, Gen Hillier has been clear that transformation is a high priority but his highest priority is and always will be supporting troops on operations and this has directly impacted the transformation process. Regardless of the reason, however, the CF transformation guiding coalition has been relatively silent for the past eight months and transformation is no longer in the forefront of everyone's mind. The author contends that transformation has stalled and one way to stop a potential downward spiral is through the re-emergence of a strong transformation advocate.

Stage Three: Developing a Vision and Strategy

Kotter believes that successful transformation requires not just a plan but also a vision. In his opinion, plans can never guide, align, and motivate action as can vision. He states that, in the change process, vision serves three general purposes: it clarifies the general direction for change, encourages people to take action in that direction and, finally, it solidifies the actions of many. According to Kotter, effective visions have at least six key characteristics:

- Imaginable (convey a picture for the future);
- Desirable (emphasize long-term interests);
- Feasible (set realistic and attainable goals);
- Focused (can provide guidance to the decision making process);
- Flexible (are adaptive to changing conditions); and

³⁰ Gen Rick Hillier, *CDS CF Transformation Sitrep # 4* (National Defence Headquarters: 19 May 2006.) The Directorate of Transformation currently consists of one Colonel and one Chief Warrant Officer.

- Communicable (are easy to convey and can be described in five minutes).

Kotter maintains that the creation of an effective vision is an iterative process that develops over time involving the leader and the guiding coalition.³¹ With this in mind, does the CF transformation vision and guiding principles provide the guidance necessary to accomplish the desired end state?³²

Gen Hillier extracted the new CF vision directly from the Defence Policy Statement, thereby lending to its credibility and substance. From the beginning, he acknowledged that the new CF vision would require an intellectual shift in how the CF conducted operations. This would require a realignment of capabilities to achieve effects where people live and work, where the threat is the most relevant and where the CF are in the most demand. Gen Hillier wanted to present Canada as a single integrated theatre of operations and align the organization accordingly. To achieve this, the CF needed to shift its focus and adopt a command centric organization vice the staff centric approach that had been pervasive in the CF for decades. Gen Hillier wanted his operational commanders to be executing mission command.³³

As already noted, the new CF vision demanded that the CF be relevant, responsive and effective in today's complex, and challenging security environment. Implementation of certain segments of the new CF vision is complete; however the

³¹ Kotter, *Leading Change*...,67-83.

³² A CF that is strategically relevant, operationally responsive and tactically decisive, supported by an effective, efficient, and adaptable defence institution; capable of operating within a dynamic and evolving security spectrum.

³³ Canadian Forces Transformation, "*From Vision to Mission*." http://www.cds.forces.gc.ca/cft-tfc/pubs/documents_e.asp; Internet; accessed 15 September 2006; Hillier, Gen Rick, Chief of Defence Staff, *Transcript of Speech given to the Royal Canadian Military Institute*, Toronto, Ontario, 22 July 2005. "Mission command. Command by intent and initiative. What I want to do as a greedy CDS is get a return on that immense investment in selection and education and training and experience and promotion of the men and women in the Canadian Forces , set them up for success, let them know what they have to achieve, give them the context in which to achieve it and then hold them accountable for exactly that."

development of one integrated effect, thereby creating a new CF culture, will require a fundamental shift in attitudes anchored in years of traditions and environmental rivalries throughout the Navy, Army, and the Air Force. The accomplishment of this shift will be the true test for the guiding coalition and the enduring power of the transformation vision. Kotter's blueprint suggests that the CF transformation vision is solid: it conveys a picture for the future, it addresses mid-to-long term interests, it is focused, it is flexible, it can be communicated quickly and if completely implemented will led to the desired end state. Still, for a vision to become a reality, it must be widely and continuously communicated to the right audience.

Stage Four: Communicating the Change Vision

Kotter observes that even smart people make critical oversights in communicating their new vision, often resulting in a break down of the transformation process. If severe enough, the oversights will cause the process to stall. Kotter maintains that even if the first three phases have been successful, it is still an enormous task to transmit a new vision to several thousands of people and ensure that they not only understand the essence of the vision but they accept it. Kotter maintains that successful communication of the vision can be attributed to seven basic principles:

- The message must be simple;
- The ability to communicate the vision through analogy or example increases the likelihood of success (verbal pictures are worth a thousand words);
- The vision must be conveyed in a variety of ways (briefings, meetings, memos, articles, seminars etc.);

- The vision must be reflective of the actions of senior leadership and it must be repeated several times or it will lose credibility;
- Inconsistencies in the vision must be addressed or they will undermine the transformation process; and
- Two-way communication must be established between those transmitting the vision and those receiving the communication.³⁴

Based on Kotter's seven principles of effective communication, were the CDS and the senior leadership of the CF successful in communicating the new CF vision?

By June 2005, Gen Hillier had personally briefed the new CF vision to over twelve thousand members of the CF and the Department of National Defence (DND).³⁵ Simultaneously, other members of the Transformation team traveled across the country, not only spreading the new CF vision but gauging its receptiveness. The transformation website provided up-to-date information and briefings on what had transpired and what was going to happen in the months to come. The *Maple Leaf* and several other journals and papers carried articles and clips about the CF transformation process.³⁶ According to Kotter's seven principles, the new CF vision easily met five of the seven principles. It was simple to convey and the verbal picture painted by the aforementioned ball of snakes was unforgettable. Transmission of the vision occurred through a wide variety of mediums ranging from face to face briefings to media print to the website. The author of this paper personally attended three transformation briefings on the new CF vision in a

³⁴ Kotter, *Leading Change*...,85-100.

³⁵ Canadian Forces Transformation, "From Vision to Mission." http://www.cds.forces.gc.ca/cft-tfc/pubs/documents_e.asp; Internet; accessed 15 September 2006.

³⁶ *Ibid.*,...

three-month span.³⁷ Repetition was not a factor and, during those briefings personnel were encouraged to have open two-way discussion with the presenters. The last two principles are more difficult to assess without interviewing certain key personnel who were not available, but after reviewing all available resources there is evidence that the senior leadership has supported the new CF vision and that the CFTT has addressed any inconsistencies that were apparent.³⁸

In the beginning, the new CF vision was communicated across a wide spectrum of the CF and the DND, thereby meeting the criteria established by Kotter. However, it is worth noting that over the last six to eight months there have been no ‘traveling road shows’ updating CF personnel on transformation, thereby leaving an impression of a low sense of urgency. With the current operational tempo, it is evident that the senior leadership does not have the time to focus on transformation that it did in the beginning of the process. A simple solution to partially mitigate this situation would be to keep the Transformation website current. The information on the site is out of date further amplifying the loss of momentum in the transformation process. Kotter believes that, by continuously communicating and fine-tuning the vision, you empower people to effect change throughout the transformation process.³⁹ Will the current lack of visibility on CF transformation influence the CF’s ability to effect broad based action?

³⁷ LCol Harris, Senior Advisor to the Commander of the Canadian Defence Academy attended a transformation brief by Col Cessford for Education Advisory Board, a transformation brief by then BGen Gosselin to the RMC Board of Governors and a transformation brief by then MGen Natynczyk to the Canadian Defence Academy Headquarters.

³⁸ Many transformation documents and minutes have not been released or published.

³⁹ Kotter, *Leading Change...*, 94.

Stage Five: Empowering Broad-Based Action

Kotter observes that major transformations require empowered people to achieve their goals. He acknowledges that, by completing stages one through four of the transformation process empowerment has been set in motion. Nevertheless he cautions that, even when the sense of urgency is high and the vision is simple and well communicated, one must still accept that numerous barriers can prevent employees from effecting the desired change. The biggest obstacles to change are structures, skills and supervisors. Strong structural stovepipes can undermine transformation in many ways. If structural stovepipes are out of alignment with the new direction, they can prevent the empowerment of people by causing frustration and eventually failure of the transformation process.

Unlike structures, systems are less difficult to manipulate; however, the ability to address every inconsistency between the new vision and the old system is practically impossible. Kotter's recommendation is to make the major 'showstoppers' the first priority. Furthermore, it is essential for human resources to work with the leadership to ensure that policies are evolving to be compatible and supportive of the new vision. Finally, a lack of support from supervisors who have not completely accepted the new vision may undermine the process. To deter this type of behaviour, Kotter recommends honest dialogue to establish possible solutions to remedy the situation. If this proves ineffective, dismissal of the naysayers may be the only option. According to Kotter, the removal of obstacles allows people to feel empowered to participate in the change

process.⁴⁰ Has the CF senior leadership been successful in removing the obstacles that could potentially block the transformation process?

Analyzing this stage objectively is tricky because transformation is still in its early stages and some of the barriers that may prevent transformation are still in place. Structurally, the successful reorganization of the CF into a command centric organization with four operational commands and a Strategic Joint Staff (SJS) reporting directly to the CDS is assessed as a win for the transformation process. That being said, and although relatively new in their formation, it is commonly believed that points of friction are developing between the Operational Commands and the SJS. These points of friction seem to be concentrated on the designation of the supported and the supporting commander and who is responsible for what.⁴¹ One could argue that these points of friction are growing pains within the commands and that over time, these teething pains will resolve themselves naturally. Alternatively, the opposite could prove to be true and further analysis will reveal that the current structure will require adjustment to rectify ongoing issues. Validations like these are common practice in the CF. In the year 2000 for example, the then VCDS (VAdm Garnett) directed that an evaluation be conducted on the concept of a centralized operational level headquarters by VAdm (ret'd) Mason and LGen (ret'd) Crabbe. Their mandate was to examine the option of having one centralized operational level headquarters in comparison to the construct that had existed since 1995.⁴² The report, known as the Mason-Crabbe Report, is an excellent example of the

⁴⁰ Kotter, *Leading Change...*,101-115.

⁴¹ Supported Commander: the commander having responsibility for all aspects of the operation. Supporting Commander: the commander who provides forces and other support to a supported commander. Department of National Defence, B-GJ-005-300/FP-000 *Canadian Forces Operations* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2005), GL-9.

⁴² Lynn Gordon Mason and Raymond Crabbe, *A Centralized Operational Level Headquarter: Report for the Department of National Defence* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2000), 1.

type of analysis required to validate if the current transformation path is suitable or if course adjustments are required to alleviate points of friction. At this point in the transformation process, gains are evident and, for the most part, people have been encouraged to participate actively in the process instead of just serving as bystanders to change. Kotter would argue that this stage is still ongoing and the most difficult obstacle, culture, has yet to appear. Kotter maintains that culture is always the last thing to transform due, in part, to the fact that the barriers that prevent cultural transformation diminish with each successful short-term win throughout the process.⁴³

Stage Six: Generating Short Term Wins

Kotter maintains that short term wins are essential to establishing credibility and endurance in the transformation process. Opportunities must be identified and planned to grab the low hanging fruit early in the process. Kotter identifies three characteristics of a short-term win: it must be clearly identifiable, the results must be highly visible and they must be directly linked to the change desired. The role of the short-term win is vital to the success of the transformation process as it validates the new vision by providing visible results. As well, it provides the members of the transformation team with the opportunity to receive feedback on their ideas thus allowing them to fine-tune the vision and, more importantly, to build momentum to keep the transformation process moving forward. In order to optimize opportunities to generate short-term wins, the leader of the transformation process relies on planners who meticulously predetermine the best point in time to accomplish certain milestones that will pave the way for a successful transformation process. Often charismatic leaders are not good managers and set

⁴³ Kotter, *Leading Change...*, 156.

conditions for success by surrounding themselves with a team capable of planning the restructuring required to implement the desired change.⁴⁴ Did the CFTT purposely plan short-term wins and, if so, did they create the momentum necessary to carry the transformation process forward?

The CDS and the Chief of Transformation (CT) designed the transformation campaign plan to create irreversible momentum and to achieve quick victories early in the process. Within one year of his initial meeting in Cornwall, the CDS had four CDS Action Teams working on four separate lines of operations.⁴⁵ He used their recommendations as the basis for the four phases of the transformation process. In the summer of 2005, the newly formulated CFTT received direction to synchronize all transformation activities and develop a campaign plan. By February 2006, the four new operational commands and the SJS were stood up resulting in the closure of the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (DCDS) organization. The Assistant Deputy Minister Human Resources (Military) (ADM HR (Mil)) was renamed the Military Personnel Command (MPC) and is going through an internal transformation to become more operationally focused. By the summer of 2006, the Chief of Force Development was online and working on the Defence Capabilities Plan and the way ahead for the CF. Based on Kotter's blueprint, the CF Transformation team had successfully developed and implemented short-term wins to generate confidence in the process and momentum to carry it forward. The realization of an operational level met all of Kotter's criteria for a short-term win. It was easily identifiable, highly visible, and directly linked to the new CF vision thus making it a significant accomplishment for transformation. One could

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 117-130.

⁴⁵ General Rick Hillier, *CDS Planning Guidance – CDS Action Teams* (National Defence Headquarters, 10 March 2005).

argue that this was the high point for transformation and all after this will be anti-climatic. Transformation is an uphill battle and it remains to be seen if the short terms wins achieved by the CFTT created sufficient forward momentum to achieve complete transformation.

Stage Seven: Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change

Kotter's basic rule for transformation is not to let up before the process is complete. He argues that, by solidifying the new approach in the culture, the risk of regression reduces exponentially. He also cautions that resistance to change never really disappears and even though transformation may have been successful in the initial stages, there are still those who do not believe in the process. Progress can regress for two reasons: first, organizations have so many interconnected parts that change on any scale becomes complicated and, second, the erosion of deep-rooted cultures is necessary for transformation to occur. Kotter describes success in Stage Seven as achieving more change, having more people buy into the transformation process, having strong leadership maintaining the right level of urgency, and a reduction in the ties that bind the parts together. Organizational transformation is a huge undertaking that normally takes years to accomplish and requires the right leadership to ensure that premature announcement of victory does not take place.⁴⁶ As for CF transformation, is it moving forward, holding its own, or regressing?

CDS Sitrep 4 articulates a long list of initiatives that require execution in order for the transformation of the CF to be complete. Remaining tasks include the construction of a common operations centre to house all the components of the new operational

⁴⁶ Kotter, *Leading Change...*, 131-144.

commands, as well as the independent validation of the transformation process by the fall 2006 to authenticate that the newly implemented command structure is correct. To date there has been no movement on this item; however, there are plans to complete a functional and structural validation of the operational commands within the coming months, the so-called ‘Spiral Two.’⁴⁷ The force structure must be reconciled with all corporate priorities in order to balance the demands between transformation and ongoing operations, each competing for scarce resources. The Standing Contingency Force (SCF) continues to evolve with a proof of concept exercise in the fall 2006 coupled with the ongoing development on the integrated training plan for all three environments plus the Special Forces. Finally, reorganization of the Defence Intelligence Branch and the Military Personnel Command is ongoing.⁴⁸ Even though these initiatives are in the campaign plan, the urgency to meet these milestones is dramatically lower than the urgency generated for the initial phases of transformation. In fact, it was easy to obtain information on transformation throughout the implementation of phase one and two from the Transformation website. Presently, it is difficult to find any updates on transformation initiatives currently ongoing unless one knows someone working on the team. With reduced momentum and the possibility of regression, the ability to anchor the new vision into the culture will be difficult at best.

⁴⁷ Hincke, MGen Joe, Chief of Programmes, interviewed by the author, 17 October 2006. MGen Hincke works for the VCDS and the Directorate of Transformation report to him. MGen Hincke has been involved with the transformation process since its inception.

⁴⁸ Gen Rick Hillier, *CDS CF Transformation Sitrep # 4* (National Defence Headquarters: 19 May 2006.)

Stage Eight: Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture

Kotter defines culture as, “norms of behaviours and shared values among a group of people.”⁴⁹ Norms of behaviour define how groups influence each other to act the same way and shared values are constructs that shape group behaviour. Kotter believes that cultures have three characteristics: they have a strong influence over human behaviour as inculcation into a specific culture routinely happens to members of an organization; cultures are pervasive throughout an organization, thus making them difficult to change; and, for the most part, cultures are intangible thus making it difficult to attack them directly. For these reasons, Kotter believes that cultural change comes at the end of the transformation process and requires the following: proven results throughout the transformation process; open communication at all levels; and, if necessary, the early removal of key personnel who are blocking the transformation process. Cultural change is the most challenging aspect of any transformation and the only chance of success lies in the ability to understand the culture one is trying to transform. It is through the application of this knowledge that one creates the right level of urgency, the right vision and the right guiding coalition thereby ensuring the conditions for success.⁵⁰ Has the CF transformation process established the conditions for success in order to achieve a cultural change that will produce the desired CF culture?

The last stage is the most difficult to assess because it is simply too early in the transformation process to predict the outcome. Although, the Canadian Forces is a unified force under one CDS and shares a common set of values, the three environments have strong and distinctive cultures that divide them. The majority of current CF

⁴⁹ Kotter, *Leading Change...*, 148.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 145-158.

operations are land centric in nature and, by necessity; the Army is the supported element with the Navy and the Air Force filling supporting roles, thereby increasing the divide between the three environments. The CDS envisioned a move from three distinctive cultures to one integrated CF culture and to facilitate this transition he proposed the development of a SCF that would not only develop the culture he desired, but also produce a focused integrated effect.⁵¹ The scheduled proof of concept for the SCF will occur in the fall of 2006 and, if the unit matures to full operational capability (FOC), it will be the first unit of its kind in the CF. It is difficult to forecast the success of this unit or the likelihood that it will reach FOC, as the resource bill will be enormous and the CF is already beyond its capacity to resource all the transformation initiatives that have been approved to date.⁵²

The senior leadership of the CF is cognizant of the fact that cultural transformation is at the embryonic stage, developmentally speaking. The ex-CT and the current VCDS, LGen Natynczyk, acknowledged that the organizational transformation was over sixty per cent complete, while the cultural transformation was less than twenty five per cent complete, thus indicating that the transformation process is far from over.⁵³ Kotter would argue that it is too early in the journey to determine conclusively if the cultural transformation will take place or not, but without reinvigoration of the transformation process, the forecast is not promising.

⁵¹ Capt (N) Paul Maddison, "Standing Contingency Task Force (SCTF) Concept of Operations Update" (Powerpoint presentation to the Transformation Steering Group, Ottawa, On, 07 Dec 2005.)

⁵² Hincke, MGen Joe, Chief of Programmes, . . . , 17 October 2006.

⁵³ LGen Walter Natynczyk, "Coalition Warfare" (lecture, Canadian Forces College, Toronto, ON, 27 September 2006), with permission.

Summary of Analysis

Kotter maintains that stages one to four shape the transformation process by preparing the recipients of change to be open and receptive to a new culture or organization, while stages five to seven enable the transformation architect to build on his or her vision and begin the introduction of the vision to the transforming body. Finally, stage eight cements and reinforces the new culture, thereby creating a foundation for it to settle into and grow upon. In theory, the eight stages appear straight forward but, in reality, the process is extremely complicated and prolonged.⁵⁴

Kotter maintains that the secret to transformation is the successful implementation of all eight stages coupled with bold leadership. Without question Gen Hillier, the senior leadership of the CF and, specifically, the CFTT provided the initial spark that ignited the transformation flame, and are directly responsible for the success achieved in CF transformation phases one and two. The author's analysis has revealed that, using Kotter's first six stages as a reference, varying levels success were obtained in the initial months, but the presence of the guiding coalition and the sense of urgency to transform the CF have since waned with the stand up of the new operational commands and the SJS coupled with the Afghanistan operation. It is too early in the transformation process to forecast if the remaining two stages will occur as expected; however, the lack of urgency and the departure of the guiding coalition directly influence the ability to accomplish these final stages with any certainty of success, thereby directly affecting the chances of accomplishing phases three and four of the CF transformation process.

⁵⁴ Kotter, *Leading Change*...., 22-23.

Conclusion

CF transformation has many accomplishments to date including the stand up of the operational commands, the SJS and CFD, thereby completing phases one and two of the transformation process. Coincident with the completion of phase two was the evolution of the Afghanistan mission into a counter-insurgency operation which shifted the focus from transformation to supporting the Afghanistan mission and manning the new commands. The competition for scarce resources left the CFTT picked clean and virtually unsustainable, thereby reducing its effectiveness as a strong guiding coalition and adversely affecting its ability to maintain a high sense of urgency throughout the transformation process. Higher priorities and a shift in focus have caused the transformation process to stall.

As noted at the outset of this paper, Machiavelli observed that leading change is a difficult task; this has certainly proven to be true for the senior CF leadership in their pursuit of CF transformation. The CF transformation process has stalled and is in need of an azimuth check to rejuvenate the process before it begins to regress. It is recommended that the senior CF leadership order an independent validation of the transformation process to be conducted to ascertain at least the following three things: the capacity of the CF to continue transformation, identification of concrete transformational accomplishments vice perceived accomplishments and most importantly, the ability to continue transformation. This review would then be followed by the development of a strategy which will map out achievable milestones that can be accomplished within the current constraints of the CF. Without this azimuth check, it is assessed that the survivability of CF transformation is low and that Gen Hillier's goal to create one

integrated CF culture will never come to fruition. The spark that initially ignited the transformation flame is in danger of burning out.

Appendix A**Kotter's Eight Stage Process**

Stage One	Establishing a sense of urgency
Stage Two	Creating the guiding coalition
Stage Three	Developing a vision and strategy
Stage Four	Communicating the change vision
Stage Five	Empowering broad based action
Stage Six	Generating short term wins
Stage Seven	Consolidating gains and producing more change
Stage Eight	Anchoring new approaches in the culture

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