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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE  
CSC 29

EXERCISE NEW HORIZONS

**FROM SURVIVAL TO EMPLOYER OF CHOICE:  
APPLYING EFFECTIVE HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES TO MEET THE  
CHALLENGES OF THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

**By LCol LW Crewson**

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*The Canadian Forces are short experienced personnel inhibiting its ability to conduct and sustain operations. Furthermore, the ability to attract and retain members is becoming more difficult due to societal changes, demographic changes, and emerging military realities. Today's specialized and highly technical equipment, in combination with a complex operational environment, demands intelligent and highly trained personnel. The cost to the CF both in terms of time and dollars is unsustainable. As a result, the CF must improve retention and become more attractive to the workforce. To do this the CF must improve its outdated Human Resource (HR) practices. The HR practices of an 'Employer of Choice' (EOC) would help resolve the CFs HR dilemma. Of equal importance, the benefits derived from being a recognized EOC are substantial and would further assist the CF personnel recovery. The CF has already implemented many EOC-like strategies indicating the willingness and desire to do what is necessary to address the personnel problem. EOC strategies can help the CF retain its qualified and experienced personnel thereby ensuring that the CF has both the quality and quantity of trained personnel it needs to effectively support operations. The CF can be an EOC.*

## **From Survival to Employer of Choice: Applying Effective Human Resource Practices to meet the Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

“Today, there are not enough trained personnel in the Canadian Forces to meet current occupational demands and the Forces have not yet succeeded in adjusting recruitment and retention policies that would help correct these gaps.”<sup>1</sup>

Sheila Fraser, Auditor General of Canada

The Canadian Forces (CF) is struggling to retain personnel and has a “critical shortage in key occupations.”<sup>2</sup> To add insult to injury, substantial reductions occur in the occupations requiring the most training and most specialized skills.<sup>3</sup> Due to the unique nature of military operations and equipment, this experience and knowledge cannot be recruited from industry or technical schools. The situation in Canada’s Air Force<sup>4</sup> speaks for all the services.

After more than a decade of reductions a number of significant challenges currently confront the Air Force. The most critical of these are personnel attrition. As the Air Force 2001 Business Plan stated, ‘The Air Force is at a crossroads in that it is quickly becoming people resource limited and no amount of equipment or funding resources will alleviate the situation in the short term. Personnel shortages critical to the delivery of Air Force capabilities continue unabated.’<sup>5</sup>

A high operational tempo further complicates the human resource (HR) dilemma, as the qualified personnel so desperately required for instructional duty are required for ongoing

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<sup>1</sup> Sheila Fraser, 2002 Speech Address by Auditor General of Canada (Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX): Symposium 2002), 3. Accessed 11 April 2003. Available from [http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/other.nsf/html/02sp05\\_e.html](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/other.nsf/html/02sp05_e.html)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Chris Wattie, “Forces Set Out To Entice Skilled Personnel Back,” National Post 1 February 2003, A2.

<sup>4</sup> Many of the examples used to backup statements in the essay are Air Force examples for the following three reasons: The Air Force requires skilled labour both in the officer and NCM ranks; the Air Force has conducted numerous and recent studies to address the personnel problems; and the author is most familiar with this environment.

<sup>5</sup> Department of National Defence, The Aerospace Capability Framework: A Strategic Vision to Guide The Transformation and Development Of Canada’s Air Force (Ottawa: CAS, Draft dated: 21 January 2003), 32.

operations. Thus, there are serious competing obligations within the CF as experienced personnel are being torn in all directions. As a result, experienced personnel are “burning out” and getting out just when they are most needed.

The Canadian Forces needs its skilled and experienced people to stay in the military and so it is looking at retention options. However, many of the retention initiatives under way will be implemented only after some members have decided to leave, and it could take the Canadian Forces as long as 30 years to achieve a stable population profile.<sup>6</sup>

To further complicate the problem, the workforce is diminishing and tomorrow’s workforce will be even more competitive for companies desperate for employees. Thus, for survival, organizations will have to develop HR practices that attract and retain the best employees in an extremely competitive market. The best employees will seek employment with an institution that looks after its employees—an Employer of Choice (EOC). EOC is a concept that has developed from studying successful organizations in the public and private sector. There are numerous characteristics unique to an EOC of which more details will be provided later in this paper. EOC strategies can help the CF retain its qualified and experienced personnel. Retention would ensure that the CF has both the quality and quantity of trained personnel it needs to effectively support operations. The purpose of this essay is to argue that, in order to maintain its operational role and functions, the CF must improve its personnel practices so as to become an Employer of Choice. In order to limit the scope of this paper, only two critical EOC HR practices will be examined, that of career planning and flexibility.

This essay will begin by providing insight into the characteristics and benefits of an EOC, revealing that employees are the foundation of the EOC model. External factors necessitating change will then be examined. Specifically, the pressures of societal changes, demographic changes, and emerging military realities, must be understood in order to appreciate the challenges the CF faces over the next twenty years. This dissertation will then argue that the

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<sup>6</sup> Department of National Defence, 2002 Report of the Auditor General of Canada: Chapter 5 - National Defence (Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General, 2002), 9. Accessed 6 April 2003. Available at <http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/domino/reports.nsf/html/0205ce.html>

EOC model<sup>7</sup>, normally regarded as a tool for competitive business, is relevant to the CF. In fact, it will be demonstrated that the CF has already implemented numerous EOC-like initiatives, and that only a few specific HR practice shortfalls are preventing the CF from becoming an EOC. Subsequently, two specific EOC practices will be recommended for the CF to pursue. It will be shown that the EOC practices of career planning and flexibility will help synchronize the needs of the CF with the needs of its members. This will ultimately aid in retention thereby helping the CF maintain its operational role and functions. Finally, some counter-arguments will be examined, as the EOC HR practices recommended challenge traditional CF paradigms. Throughout the paper, numerous references will be used including studies based on the United States (US) Armed Forces. These studies are considered relevant, as Canada and the US share common socio-economic ideals and challenges. Moreover, both nations' Armed Forces are volunteer forces.<sup>8</sup>

### *Section One – the Characteristics and benefits of an EOC*

To help understand the EOC concept, common characteristics of an EOC must be identified. It is also essential to appreciate the tangible and intangible benefits realized by recognized EOC organizations.

The basic ideology behind an EOC is its recognition of its employees as its most valuable asset.<sup>9</sup> To attract and retain the best personnel possible, EOC organizations have some common characteristics that can be classified under the following sub-headings: leadership; organizational

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<sup>7</sup> After reviewing many strategies to 'cure' troubled institutions, the author concluded that the practices of an EOC were exactly what was needed to solve the majority of retention issues in the CF. The essay will not do a comparison of other possible models due to limitations placed on the length of the paper. The paper will, however, argue the advantages of the EOC model. Suffice it to say that any strategy, or combination of solutions that could help repair the CFs current HR problems, would be most welcomed.

<sup>8</sup> The author of this paper has served in Canada and three years in the United States and is therefore familiar with the socio-economic similarities between the two countries.

<sup>9</sup> Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Becoming an Employer of Choice, 1. Accessed 7 April 2003. Available from <http://www.kjcg.com/resources/bw/employerofchoice.html>

culture; care of the people; growth and opportunity; a sense of community; clear work agreements; communication; good pay and benefits; safe and updated equipment; and nationality and gender neutrality.<sup>10</sup> Specifically, EOCs “are recognized for their leadership, culture, and best practices that attract, optimize, and hold top talent, achieving corporate objectives.”<sup>11</sup> It is an institution that is recognized for its benefits, its fairness and its opportunities. Leaders are recognized as having the skills and knowledge and being “worthy of the respect and followership”.<sup>12</sup> Employees are valued for “their contribution, skills and talent”<sup>13</sup>. This helps in fostering a feeling of relevance and job satisfaction. Thus, EOCs “stimulate professional aspirations and satisfy personal needs.”<sup>14</sup> As a result, EOC employees are less likely to leave an organization.<sup>15</sup> Dr. Jacquelyn P. Robinson is a Workforce Development Specialist with the Alabama Co-operative Extension System. She describes the EOC concept as follows:

In actuality, the idea of being an Employer of Choice is really a perception about the establishment—a perception commonly held by workers...and the general public. Companies who generally have a large recruit pool share common traits...these companies recognize their employees as their most valuable resources. They recognize that company success depends on their employees feeling empowered, motivated, and trained. Employees are treated with respect and dignity, and are encouraged to continue their personal and career development.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, A Worthy Employer Is..., 1-4. Accessed 7 April 2003. Available from <http://www.kjcg.com/resources/bw/worthyemployer.html>

<sup>11</sup> University of Idaho, UI Employer of Choice Survey Results (Institutional Research and Assessment), 1. Accessed 7 April 2003. Available from <http://www.webs.uidaho.edu/employerofchoice/Survey.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Kaleel, A Worthy..., op. cit., 2.

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

<sup>14</sup> University of Idaho, op. cit., 1.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Jacquelyn P. Robinson, “Becoming An Employer of Choice: What Does it Mean?” The Workplace Vol. 3, 22. (Alabama Cooperative Extension System, 2002), 2. Accessed 27 May 2003. Available from [www.aces.edu/workforc.html](http://www.aces.edu/workforc.html)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

Thus, while there are numerous EOC characteristics, the recognition of employees as a valued asset, based on their day-to-day actions, is common to all EOC organizations.

To promote employee satisfaction, EOCs have adopted a ‘family-friendly’ policy. A family-friendly policy helps to establish a healthy balance between work and family life. “The organization supports people in pursuing a satisfying life outside the workplace...without undue hardship and without jeopardizing their careers...or sacrificing their families...for the sake of the organization.”<sup>17</sup> This desire for a healthy balance has not been restricted to just civilian organizations. “Studies have shown that as perceived strain or incompatibility between job and family increases, family members are more likely to exert pressure on the military member to leave the service.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, a family-first practice is critical in improving an employee’s contentment with an organization and is vital to personnel retention. The USAF has recognized this reality and many senior USAF personnel have embraced the catchphrase, “while we recruit the individual, we retain the family.”<sup>19</sup>

To synchronize the needs of an organization with those of its employees, effective HR practices are required. Two key EOC practices that assist in this endeavour are career planning and flexibility. Career planning encompasses clear, defined employer/employee work agreements or contracts. An EOC recognizes that the “old standard of a ‘job for life’ is gone, [and] people are seeking a new ‘contract’ with their organizations.”<sup>20</sup> Clear work agreements satisfy both the employer and the employee as the expectations are laid out in the work agreement. This allows for informed decision-making. The work agreement would include such items as the duration of the contract the location in which it is to be served. Contracts are tailored to meet the needs of individuals to the greatest extent possible in as much as the

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<sup>17</sup> Kaleel, A Worthy..., op. cit., 1.

<sup>18</sup> George Vernez and Gail L. Zellman, Families and Mission: A Review of the Effects of family Factors on Army Attrition, Retention, and Readiness (The Rand Corporation: Santa Monica, August 1997), 50.

<sup>19</sup> USA, Superintendent Print News (Air Force News Agency/NSOP: San Antonio), private e-mail message to [[tammy.cournoyer@afnew.af.mil](mailto:tammy.cournoyer@afnew.af.mil)], 11 Jun 03.

<sup>20</sup> Kaleel, Becoming..., op. cit., 2.



institution can allow. As individual and organizational needs change, new work agreements can be negotiated. As employees' personal situations, priorities, and goals are likely to change over the course of their career, flexibility is necessary. Retention of talented employees over the long-term requires options that may include various training, upgrading, and possibly a change of responsibilities. Thus, career planning that includes individualized work agreements and flexibility are two key strategies that help EOCs meet their employees' needs.

Organizations, from both the public and private sector, seeking EOC status apply to a specialized independent research firm, such as, 'the Herman Group' in Canada or the US. The research firm conducts a preliminary qualification assessment, prior to the more thorough, and extensive, EOC examination. Those that pass the "rigorous evaluation process,"<sup>21</sup> achieve the coveted EOC status.

The tangible and intangible benefits derived from EOC status are significant. To realize the benefits from being an EOC, however, the institution must have a positive reputation and be renowned as being a worthy organization.

The greater the public awareness of an organizations reputation as an Employer of Choice, the greater the pool of talent it will attract and have to draw upon. Successful implementation of the Employer of Choice strategy will make the search for top talent more of a selection process than that of a recruiting process. The increased quality/value/performance of new people combined with savings on recruitment costs should provide a substantial return on investment that will more than repay the cost of the strategic approach to becoming and remaining an Employer of Choice.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, an EOC does not have to actively recruit or struggle to retain personnel. The tangible benefits can be calculated from financial savings gleaned through retention, and the resultant

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<sup>21</sup> The Herman Group, Employer of Choice.com (Employer of Choice: Greensboro), (no page number). Accessed 9 June 2003. Available from <http://www.employerofchoice.com/>

<sup>22</sup> Kaleel, Becoming..., op. cit., 1.

savings in the cost of recruiting and training.<sup>23</sup> The intangible benefits include increased morale, performance, loyalty, productivity, and workforce attractiveness. Thus, an organization that is known as an EOC “will have a significant advantage in the competition for top talent.”<sup>24</sup> “The long-term success of any organization hinges on its ability to recruit and retain the best possible talent, and to enable its people to develop and perform to their highest potential.”<sup>25</sup> The organization can then focus on operations and functionality, vice personnel issues and costly recruiting drives. Thus, being an EOC contributes significantly to obtaining maximize efficiency from limited personnel resources.

The disadvantages to an EOC are few. The primary disadvantage is HR strategies must be continuously reviewed and updated to ensure they are current, relevant and appropriate to the workforce. Every organization, however, regardless of whether they are an EOC, should review HR policies on a continuing basis thus mitigating the cost. Another disadvantage to an EOC, is the increased time required to develop individualized contracts, and career planning. These costs are also mitigated by the tangible and intangible benefits gleaned through being a recognized EOC.

EOCs are publicly recognized through printed electronic media—books, periodicals, news bulletins, and the internet. Mediacorps Canada Inc. publishes an annual review of Canada’s top 100 companies.<sup>26</sup> In 2001 over 30,000 companies were reviewed, and in 2002, 42,000 were

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<sup>23</sup> The savings estimated by retaining qualified pilots were calculated before offering CF pilots a retention bonus. The actual cost of the lost investment due to pilot attrition will be discussed later in this paper. Interesting to note, the CF is currently offering an enlistment bonus of \$20,000 to entice skilled personnel back into the military. Chris Wattie. “Forces Set Out To Entice Skilled Personnel Back,” National Post, 1 February, 2003, A2.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Novogrodsky and Associates, Connecting the Dots: Special Report #3 Recipe for Expanding Vision and Effectiveness for Diversity Strategy and Program April 2002, (no page number). Accessed 7 April 2003. Available from <http://www.novogrodsky.com/connecting/default.asp?load=special13>

<sup>25</sup> Kaleel, Becoming..., op. cit., 1.

<sup>26</sup> Mediacorps starts “by examining over 30,000 Canadian companies who were actively recruiting. From the 30,000 they invited 1,000 companies to participate with 100 being identified as a Canadian Top Employer.” Shell Canada, Shell Canada Limited – One of Canada’s Top 100 Employers, 1. Accessed 6 June 2003. Available from <http://www.shell.ca/code/careers/campus/employer/top100.html>

analyzed.<sup>27</sup> Shell Canada has been identified as one such EOC in both 2001 and 2002. “Shell Canada Limited is that rare breed of large employer that takes care of its employees with the same fervour that it shows in developing its business.”<sup>28</sup> Tim Faithfull, the President and Chief Executive Officer of Shell Canada stated:

People are critical to the success of our business. We value diversity in the work force and people are selected, developed and treated fairly on the basis of merit. Opportunities to contribute to the business are early and ongoing with processes in place to help all employees be productive and successful.<sup>29</sup>

Many other public and private organizations are identified in the report including the Bank of Nova Scotia, Georgian College in Barrie, Ontario, and the City of Waterloo, Ontario.<sup>30</sup> The National Research Council of Canada (NRC) is a governmental organization that prides itself in being an EOC. The NRC proudly advertises its EOC qualities of:

Quality management; Interesting jobs; Personal growth and career opportunities; An inviting workplace with teamwork; openness, and balance of work and family life; constant exposure to advance technology and advanced business management practices; Respect for diversity, employment equity, and Canada’s two Official Languages; Competitive salaries and benefits.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Co-operative Trust Company of Canada, “Focus on Work-Life Balance Now a Priority Perk at Canada’s Top 100 Employees,” National Press Release, 2. Accessed 6 June 2003. Available from [http://www.co-operative.trust.ca/press\\_national.asp](http://www.co-operative.trust.ca/press_national.asp)

<sup>28</sup> Shell, op. cit., (no page number)

<sup>29</sup> Tim W. Faithfull, Message from the CEO/President of Shell Canada Limited, 1. Accessed 9 June 2003. Available at [http://www.shell.ca/code/careers/campus/employer/ceo\\_message.html](http://www.shell.ca/code/careers/campus/employer/ceo_message.html)

<sup>30</sup> Mediacorps, “A to Z: The Top 100 Employers.” Maclean’s Vol. 114 Issue 45, 5 November 2001: 1-6. Accessed 9 June 2003. Available from [http://web23.epnet.com/delivery.asp?tb=1&\\_ug=db+1+1n+en-us+si](http://web23.epnet.com/delivery.asp?tb=1&_ug=db+1+1n+en-us+si)

<sup>31</sup> National Research Council of Canada, NRC AN Employer of Choice, 1. Accessed 7 June 2003. Available from [https://hrbm55srv2.hrb.nrc.ca/HRB/Career\\_Main.nsf/page/EofC](https://hrbm55srv2.hrb.nrc.ca/HRB/Career_Main.nsf/page/EofC)

The examples reaffirm the employees' criticality to an organization and the effort EOCs exude to satisfy their employees' needs.

In summary, EOCs are dynamic and successful organizations. Their personnel practices are based on attracting and retaining top employees--their most valuable asset. Moreover, EOC status provides significant tangible and intangible benefits allowing organizations to gain maximum efficiency from their limited resources.

### *Section Two – External Factors Necessitating Change*

Societal change, demographic change, and emerging military realities are posing new challenges to the CF. These challenges also necessitate changes to current HR strategies.

Today's societal realities reveal a more family-orientated society. Home, family and community are an employee's first priority. Both parents, whether cohabitating or not, are normally involved in raising the children. The dutiful wife of the past is now a working spouse most likely involved, or seeking to be involved, in a profession. "The notion that the wife should dutifully follow her husband, despite the costs she may incur in terms of career advancement or satisfaction has been considerably weakened."<sup>32</sup> In fact, as far back as 1981, "one of every six Army colonels hand-picked...to command troops turned down the honor"<sup>33</sup> for family reasons including the wife's desire for stability. Thus, the family-oriented society is not a new challenge to the CF, but an old problem that was never resolved due to outdated HR policies. Regardless, the family-orientated society is prevalent and thus, HR polices must incorporate family-friendly practices.

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<sup>32</sup> Vernez, op. cit., 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 36.

Working spouses have created a need to revise HR policies. Dual income is often a necessity<sup>34</sup> and spousal incomes often exceed those of the service member. General M. Baril, during his tenure as CDS, stated that frequent moves often have “adverse and significant effects on family income.”<sup>35</sup> “The absence of a second income or the delays in getting one inevitably complicate a family’s financial situation and can increase tensions within the family unit.”<sup>36</sup> Cash flow, however, is not the only factor in spouses seeking employment. Today’s spouses are also careerists seeking self-actualization and fulfillment. “They want to pursue meaningful careers and do satisfying work.”<sup>37</sup> For reasons of both personnel satisfaction and household economics, spousal employment is important to military families. A review of retention problems in the US Army concluded that, “innovative ways should be sought to minimize the Army’s interference with spouses’ work and professional aspirations. The Army should reassess in that light its relocation, separation, and duty assignment policies and procedures.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, spousal career implications have also caused the need for militaries to review their HR practices.

Today’s family situations can be complex. The ever-changing domestic situation of today’s employees often include satisfying the needs of the fractured family—dependant care, split families and dependant visitation requirements. Additionally, more families are choosing to co-locate geographically with their parents to assist their folks in their later years—a fair, reasonable and respectable aspiration. If the diverse personal family needs of employees are not satisfactorily met, employees are likely to become discontented. Discontented employees will then search out and quickly depart for an organization that will satisfy their individual requirements. Moreover, “there is evidence that family factors become more important with increasing years of service.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, it is the experienced and qualified personnel that are most

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<sup>34</sup> The necessity of dual income could be real or perceived. A ‘real’ necessity for dual income may involve a situation where families have special need requirements for dependants.

<sup>35</sup> DND, *The Aerospace...*, op. cit., 37.

<sup>36</sup> SCNDVA, *Quality of Life Report* (Ottawa), 13. Accessed 6 June 2003. Available from <http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfoComDoc/36/1/NDVA/Studies/Reports/ndvarp03/13-chap5-e.htm>

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Vernez, op. cit., viii.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

affected by family requirements and these are the very people the CF needs to retain. Complex family situations require flexible and individualized attention. An EOC structures its personnel practices to cater to these new societal realities.

Demographic change is forcing new workforce realities requiring robust HR policies. The recruiting pool is changing significantly.<sup>40</sup> Due to the shrinking traditional workforce, employers will have to attract and draw from the offspring of the immigrant population.<sup>41</sup> Organizations will have to be flexible, innovative and willing to respond to the varying needs of numerous cultures to ensure the demands of these new employees are being met. Personnel with experience and talent will continue to be a sought after commodity and the competition for top performers will continue to tighten. As a result, top performers will be in demand and will seek employment with a reputable organization--an EOC. When demand exceeds supply, concessions and aggressive HR practices are required to attract and retain talented and experienced personnel. While the “need for (a) diverse and highly talented workforce will only increase,”<sup>42</sup> the pool from which to draw employees is running dry, thus retention is imperative. “To be an ‘employer of choice’ the CF must compete for shrinking HR resources in Canada by skillful marketing of its employment, training and career opportunities.”<sup>43</sup> As demand for employees will exceed the supply of employees for the foreseeable future, EOC personnel practices become increasingly important to the CF.

New CF realities have demonstrated the requirement for a leaner force in which educated personnel with highly specialized and technical skill sets are, and will continue to be, the norm.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Irene A. Colin, An Overview Of Activities In Support Of Strategic Human Resource Planning, 3. Accessed 11 April 2003. Available from: <http://www.iamps.org/pdf/collin.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Department of National Defence, Canadian Officership in the 21st Century: Strategic Guidance for the CF Officer Corps and the OPD System (Ottawa: DND Canada, March 2001), I-7.

<sup>42</sup> Kaleel, Becoming..., op. cit., 1.

<sup>43</sup> Department of National Defence, Directive For Military Occupational Structure (MOS) Policy “Tiger Team”, (5555-121-1 PD3 (Policy), 15 July 2002), 13.

<sup>44</sup> DND, Canadian Officership..., op. cit., I-7.

This results in a commitment to train these personnel at substantial cost. The CF in particular has an enormous training bill, as military assets are complicated, technical and unique. For example, the training investment in one senior level pilot is worth in excess of 4.8 million dollars: the expected four-year attrition for 2001-2004 is 540 pilots totaling 2.6 billion dollars in lost investment.<sup>45</sup> Thus, any action that aids in personnel retention is critical to the CF. As specialization and technical skills continue to increase in importance, training costs will also continue to escalate. The ideology of an EOC provides for economy of effort in this endeavour. If experienced members are retained, less recruiting is required. Fewer recruits result in fewer trainees and therefore fewer instructors are necessary. Therefore, more qualified personnel are available for operations thus maximizing the efficiency from the limited personnel resources. Conversely, “throwing good money at fixing a ‘front-door’ recruiting problem seems silly [sic] if the ‘back-door’ of retention is fundamentally broken.”<sup>46</sup> Retention ultimately improves the overall quality of an institutions workforce as skill and knowledge are preserved.<sup>47</sup> While “recruiting focuses on quantitative deficiencies...retention emphasizes qualitative aspects as well.”<sup>48</sup> The Air Force acknowledged that, “a successful retention plan is vital to retaining the considerable experience and resource investment that we have in our people, and to maintaining the overall operational capability.”<sup>49</sup> Moreover, military operations often put human lives at risk. Due to the growing complexity of real-world operations, experienced, intelligent and competent personnel are essential for safe and successful operations. Thus, the new realities for the CF necessitate the requirement to attract and retain quality personnel capable of operating

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<sup>45</sup> Department of National Defence, Pilot Retention Study, (D Air PM&S SPO, 14 Oct 2000), (no page number).

<sup>46</sup> Ankensen, Christopher and Tethong, Losel. “Birds in the Hand: The Need For A Retention Based Strategy For the CF.” Canadian Military Journal Vol. 2. No 2. (Summer 2001), 17. Accessed 5 November 2002. Available from: [http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol2/no2\\_e/policy2\\_e.html](http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol2/no2_e/policy2_e.html).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

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

<sup>49</sup> DND, The Aerospace..., op. cit., 34.

“effectively in a technological and information-rich environment.”<sup>50</sup> An EOC is able to retain the best and provide the necessary efficiency.

The CF recognizes the challenges of the future.

The Canadian Forces is committed to developing and implementing policy and program initiatives that will enable members and their families to effectively respond to the stresses associated with military life and better balance the often-conflicting demands of work and family.<sup>51</sup>

‘Military HR Strategy 2020’ (HR 2020) clearly lays out the HR issues facing the CF over the next 20 years. Four planning scenarios<sup>52</sup> were created as a strategic planning tool. Each of the scenarios identify the need for talent, the competition for skilled workers, the potential difficulties in retention and recruiting, and the challenges associated with emerging military operations including unconventional warfare. In fact, a CF Military Occupational Structure (CF MOS) working group has been formed to analyze the impact of technology on CF jobs and to address the serious recruitment and retention problem.<sup>53</sup>

The desired End State for this project is a set of conditions which provide increased operational effectiveness, increased flexibility for the CF to provide members to select a wider spectrum of employment and career opportunities, and cost benefits derived through greater retention and enhanced career attractiveness.<sup>54</sup>

Two overarching HR obligations of CF MOS are to serve the defence mission and to take care of

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<sup>50</sup> DND, Canadian Officership..., op. cit., I-4.

<sup>51</sup> Department of National Defence, CF Families (Ottawa: DND Canada, February 17, 2003), 1. Accessed 6 June 2003. Available from [http://www.forces.gc.ca/hr/families/engraoh/home\\_e.asp](http://www.forces.gc.ca/hr/families/engraoh/home_e.asp)

<sup>52</sup> Department of National Defence, Military HR Strategy 2020: Facing the People Challenges of the Future (published under the auspices of the Chief of Defence Staff, ADM (HR-Mil), November 2002), 12-14.

<sup>53</sup> Department of National Defence, MOSART/HRM Stakeholders MOS Policy Working Group Presentation transcript (MOSART Policy Tiger Team, Spring 2002), 9.

<sup>54</sup> Department of National Defence, Project Charter: Military Occupational Structure (MOS) Analysis, Redesign and Tailoring Project (MOSART) Version 1.0, (ADM (HR-Mil), August 2001), 11.



the people.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the CF is aware it must improve its HR practices in order to maintain its operational role and functions.

For reasons of societal change, demographic change, and emerging military realities, it is logical and necessary that the CF improves its HR practices. The escalating training costs necessary for today's specialty skills make it imperative that the CF improves retention. For now and the foreseeable future, only EOCs will have the HRs--quantity and quality--that they desire. The remaining employers will be fighting for the leftovers.

### *Section Three - CF Challenges.*

The CF is not in direct competition with any Canadian company. It is the only organization in the country that offers and provides military service. "Members of the Canadian 'Profession of Arms' subscribe to Canadian values. As military professionals they accept their duty to hold and protect these values, when necessary, as the force of last resort."<sup>56</sup> CF members are thus "servants of the nation"<sup>57</sup> which causes one to question the relevance of EOC practices to the CF.

CF personnel are Canadian citizens in a volunteer force. While the CF is not in direct competition with any other producer or retail organization for business purposes, it is in direct competition for personnel resources. The reason the EOC model is relevant to the CF is due to the evolving competition for skilled and competent workers. If the hardships of military life are perceived to exceed the honour of serving the country, volunteers won't enlist. If military life and personnel policies cause undo financial or family hardships, members won't be retained. Fortunately, EOC practices are universal and apply to profit and non-profit organizations. In fact, the CF satisfies the majority of EOC attributes due to its ongoing HR

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<sup>55</sup> DND, MOSART HRM Stakeholders..., op. cit., 9.

<sup>56</sup> DND, Military HR Strategy 2020..., op. cit., 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

efforts that include ‘Quality of Life’ (QOL) initiatives.<sup>58</sup> The CF has a variety of technically advanced fields of study and opportunities to advance. Further education is not only encouraged, it is financed. The benefits are numerous and the pay reasonable. There are opportunities for travel and adventure. Moreover, CF members can make a significant contribution to world peace and security. Leadership, culture, benefits, work environment, opportunities for personal growth, fairness--the CF certainly appears to have already adapted the EOC model. What, then, are the issues preventing the CF from becoming an EOC?

CF HR practices have not kept pace with societal changes, workforce transformations, or even the CFs own current military realities. Antediluvian expressions such as, ‘the military owns you,’ or ‘they’re pension slaves,’ curtail progressive thinking further frustrating attempts at retention. The CF has also been slow to explore flexible alternatives to traditional practices. Standardized, six-month deployments and limiting opportunities to specific ‘cap badges’<sup>59</sup> are two examples of fighting change. Most importantly, the CF has not satisfied its members with long-term career planning commitments, and flexible career options. As a result, the CF is not family-friendly and household stability remains an issue.

The key shortfall is a lack of balance between stability, mobility and deployability. Stability refers to being fixed or established<sup>60</sup> in one geographic location for an extended period of time and not likely to move. Mobility is the willingness to relocate to different geographic locations. Deployability, or PERSTEMPO, is the willingness and preparedness to accept operational duties away from home for extended periods of time on a regular basis. Deployability is the current CF paradigm and will remain the focus of CF operations for the foreseeable future. The three issues of mobility, stability and deployability are interrelated and remain a challenge to the CF and a potential source of dissatisfaction to its members. The U.S.

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<sup>58</sup> QOL is a CF initiative taken to address a number of shortfalls--housing, family care etc.--based on Senate Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (SCONDVA) findings and recommendations.

<sup>59</sup> The expression ‘Cap badges’ refer to CF trades or occupations.

<sup>60</sup> F.G. Fowler and H.W. Fowler, The Pocket Oxford Dictionary (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996), 887.

Army has a similar dilemma: some of the “most problematic employment policies characteristic of the military are frequent relocation...and frequent separations of the military member from home and family.”<sup>61</sup> A fair balance of stability, mobility and deployability is essential to synchronize the needs of the CF with those of its members.

Stability is a desired commodity amongst the majority of serving members.<sup>62</sup> This reinforces the realities of today’s socio-economic situation. One retention study summarized that the location of choice would equate to a 27 percent pay increase for retention purposes.<sup>63</sup> As introduced earlier in this paper, stability allows for: community involvement; spousal employment; long-term planning; a stronger support system; fractured families; consistent health and dental care; consistent schooling for children; pursuit of other interests--bands, sports, businesses--and generally improved quality of life. Additionally, for those near retirement, stability allows members to create the connections necessary for their follow-on career and integration into the community. Geographic stability also offers some significant advantages to the CF itself. Huge financial savings could be realized by not having to relocate families and households. Technical skills and specialization, critical to today’s complex military environments, could be retained and mastered by keeping members in the same area. Cross-training<sup>64</sup> requirements would be reduced, further reducing training costs and easing the burden on training units. This would ultimately result in a higher state of operational readiness as the CF would not only retain personnel, but more personnel would be operationally qualified at any given time.

The CF, however, requires that its members be mobile in order to fill positions across a broad spectrum. Some mobility is generally acceptable to members when it is planned, correctly

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<sup>61</sup> Vernez, op. cit., 28.

<sup>62</sup> Department of National Defence, Annual Career Manager Presentation D Mil C (with permission), (Toronto: Canadian Forces College, 2003).

<sup>63</sup> Vernez, op. cit., 32.

<sup>64</sup> Cross-training refers to personnel skilled or qualified in one area of expertise moving to another related field, but requiring new knowledge. An example of this would be a pilot or aircraft technician transferring to a different airframe.

timed, and the duration is specified. Unfortunately, however, the military has not been able to forecast, with any certainty, a career plan for individuals, nor has it been willing to guarantee career paths to its employees. More often than not, people are finding out where they are posted only a few months in advance with no idea of the follow-on plan. An informal survey at Canadian Forces Command and Staff College (CSC), a one-year course, revealed that only one in eight, 12% of the 76 Canadian students involved, were aware of their follow-on posting prior to their arrival at the College. This is unacceptable for today's families. "Family relocation [or mobility] places both financial and psychological burdens on families."<sup>65</sup> Moreover, lack of stability is directly linked to attrition.

Relocation and separation have both been examined in research studies of retention. Given the dollar and emotional costs of moves and separations that families bear, the implicit hypothesis is generally that they will contribute to termination decisions, especially if the number of moves or the amount of separation exceeds some undefined threshold and begins to be seen as 'excessive'.<sup>66</sup>

Therefore, to solve retention problems, the CF must solve the stability versus mobility dilemma.

Discussions on stability versus mobility cannot be debated without addressing deployability. The military emphasis has been and continues to be on deployability<sup>67</sup> of personnel—warfighters, planners, peacekeepers etc. These lengthy foreign operations have increased considerably in the past ten years and the CF image has been smeared by negative media reports<sup>68</sup> with regard to excessive deployments. Members also need and desire some deployability for professionalism, experience, job satisfaction, relevance, and pride.

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<sup>65</sup> Vernez, op. cit., 28.

<sup>66</sup> Vernez, op. cit., 31.

<sup>67</sup> Colin, op. cit., 3.

<sup>68</sup> The CF receives the brunt of almost daily media reports, most discussing the poor conditions. A good example is: Christie Blatchford. "Military In Peril, Report Warns," National Post 8 October 2002, A4. The report negatively portrays the current situation in the CF. Specifically it states that some members have not "had a summer holiday in a decade;" and that some infantry captains have "lived at their home bases only six months in the past three years." This negative media further complicates the CFs ability to attract personnel to the organization.

Operational tempo needs to be high enough to provide personnel the opportunity to practice what they trained to do in order for them to derive professional satisfaction from their careers, but when it becomes too high it can contribute to a person's decision to leave the service.<sup>69</sup>

For a member to be deployable, household stability is essential. Deployability is much less stressful on both the member and their family if the family has a strong, healthy support system in a familiar environment. Thus, household stability makes deployability much easier for all involved. If the CF emphasis is to be on primacy of operations as indicated in all the current strategic documents, and future operations require high rates of deployability, then one can argue that deployability is more important than mobility in today's CF.

The CF demands that members be deployable in order to conduct operations. The CF also desires that their members be mobile to fill positions across the country and around the world. Conversely, CF members desire household stability for QOL and for deployability. The stability versus mobility dilemma is currently putting a strain on the relationship between the CF, its members, and their families.

In summary, due to societal changes, demographic changes and emerging military realities, the EOC model is relevant to the CF. In fact, many of the CFs QOL initiatives and employee benefits satisfy EOC assessment criteria. Unfortunately, the CFs current personnel practices with regards to household stability and satisfying family needs are not being met. As a result, members are leaving the military. These issues must be resolved before the CF can arrest its current retention problem and be deemed an EOC.

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<sup>69</sup> DND, The Aerospace..., op. cit., 45.

*Section Four – EOC Strategies to Pursue*

“The only thing harder than getting a new idea into the military mind, is getting the old one out.”<sup>70</sup>  
Capt. Sir Basil Liddell-Hart

Many organizations assert that, “people are our most important asset...but few actually practice it.”<sup>71</sup> The CF also recognizes that the key ingredient to an institution is the employee. A Minister of National Defence report affirms this priority. “CF members and DND employees are the Defence institution’s most important asset. They are the people who do the work, delivering the National Defence mandate, mission, and priorities. For this reason, senior leaders are putting people first.”<sup>72</sup> The CF can improve its personnel practices, so as to become an EOC, and maintain its operational role and functions, by effectively implementing two critical EOC HR practices—career planning and flexibility. Such a framework would satisfy the needs of both the CF and its members.

With today’s socio-economic issues, (dual income family, schooling issues, etc.), the CF must conduct individualized long-term planning. This long-term planning is necessary to synchronize members’ needs with those of the CF. For example, many members are willing to relocate, but timing is critical as is the duration and the follow-on plan--where I am going, for how long and then what happens after that? Informed decisions require information. Spousal employment issues and schooling are two key elements that will continue to dominate members’ decision-making process. With enough advance notice, members and spouses could map out a plan to coincide with a posting of fixed-duration to another geographic location. This could

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<sup>70</sup> Capt. Sir Basil Liddell-Hart, Canadian Forces College (Toronto, 2002). Quote of the day site. (Date unknown).

<sup>71</sup> Kaleel, Becoming..., op. cit., 1.

<sup>72</sup> Department of National Defence, Recruiting, Training, and Retention (MND, DPR 2001-2002), 2. Accessed 11 April 2003. Available from [http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/dpr/01-02/nd/ND0102dpr02\\_e.asp](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/dpr/01-02/nd/ND0102dpr02_e.asp)

include: a leave-of-absence or sabbatical, an opportunity to start a family or raise young children, educational advancement, or career upgrading. Imposed Restriction<sup>73</sup> (IR) is an excellent short-term option toward solving some relocation issues, but it also requires a follow-on plan to make an informed decision. Essentially, informed employees are contented employees especially when it pertains to a plan for their future.

Concomitant with long-term planning is the requirement for an individualized work agreement. This contract, while difficult to offer career specifics, could certainly contain general agreements specifying boundaries or limitations. These boundaries may only need to include the duration and location of the next and follow-on posting—a six-year outlook. This certainly would meet the CFs needs for planning purposes and the member’s needs for responsible and informed decision-making. Surprise postings would be eliminated thus satisfying the socio-economic requirements of stability for fixed durations. Even undesirable locations could be filled if the expectation was for a fixed period. Thus, long-term planning in conjunction with work agreements would greatly assist in solving the CFs retention dilemma.

Flexibility is necessary due to changing family situations and changing career aspirations. Through the course of one’s career, these aspirations and priorities will change numerous times, as individuals develop at different rates and personal priorities change. The military needs to be flexible to respond to each individual and the changes that occur over the span of a lengthy career. The CF also needs to be flexible, adaptable and attractive to all recruits and members, especially those with talent and skills the CF desire. Thus, CF career options must be flexible enough to accommodate personnel of all ages, backgrounds and experience levels. Flexible career paths are also necessary to ensure options are available in order to retain talented and productive personnel who may no longer be mobile, or who may no longer seek promotion. To assist career managers in this regard, generic positions must be found. For years, relatively generic military staff positions have had specific “cap badges” assigned to the position. As a result, posting plots have been more complicated than need be and many CF members have been refrained from potentially desirable positions, and/or locations. With the creation of ‘joint’

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<sup>73</sup> The policy of IR allows members to leave their family in the current location of residence while the member lives and works in a different geographic location.

positions, geographic stability would become easier. The introduction of army and naval personnel to positions in NORAD, serves as an excellent example of increasing flexibility. The CF must pursue options to increase the career flexibility afforded to its members.

The CF must be prepared to offer experienced personnel occupational transfers, when requested, based on merit. Although there are costs involved, the retention of a member already proficient in military skills would help offset the new costs of training. Regardless, it would be more cost effective than recruiting someone with no military experience. The military has always practised this to some extent, especially in marketable occupations such as: doctors, dentists, lawyers, and aircrew positions. The effort should continue with more options explored for proven members seeking a new challenge. Exit interviews should be conducted to ensure that deserving personnel have looked at all possible military options before seeking employment elsewhere. Providing career options increases the attractiveness of the CF to the general workforce, and helps in the retention of experienced personnel—two important EOC aims. Moreover, the resultant effect of improving HR practices that help retain qualified and experienced personnel, is that more serving members will be available for operational roles and functions. Military HR 2020 has identified the need for increased flexibility.

In an effort to continue the retention strategy the CF will: develop flexible terms of service and employ contemporary work practices to meet a broader range of organisational and personal needs and to attract and retain ‘skilled’ workers based upon Canadian demographic trends [and the CF will] create career fields that enhance career flexibility through transition assistance and choice, and enable the rotation of personnel, providing respite from operational tempo and access to developmental periods.<sup>74</sup>

To amalgamate the EOC-based recommendations into something the CF can use, a generic planning model must be developed. Opportunities for relocation (mobility) and periods of stability/deployability must be identified. These periods of mobility, stability and deployability

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<sup>74</sup> DND, Military HR Strategy 2020....., op. cit., p 21.



must be harmonized with the member’s family-stage cycle. Figure One, the “Family-Military Balance Model”, illustrates such a structure.

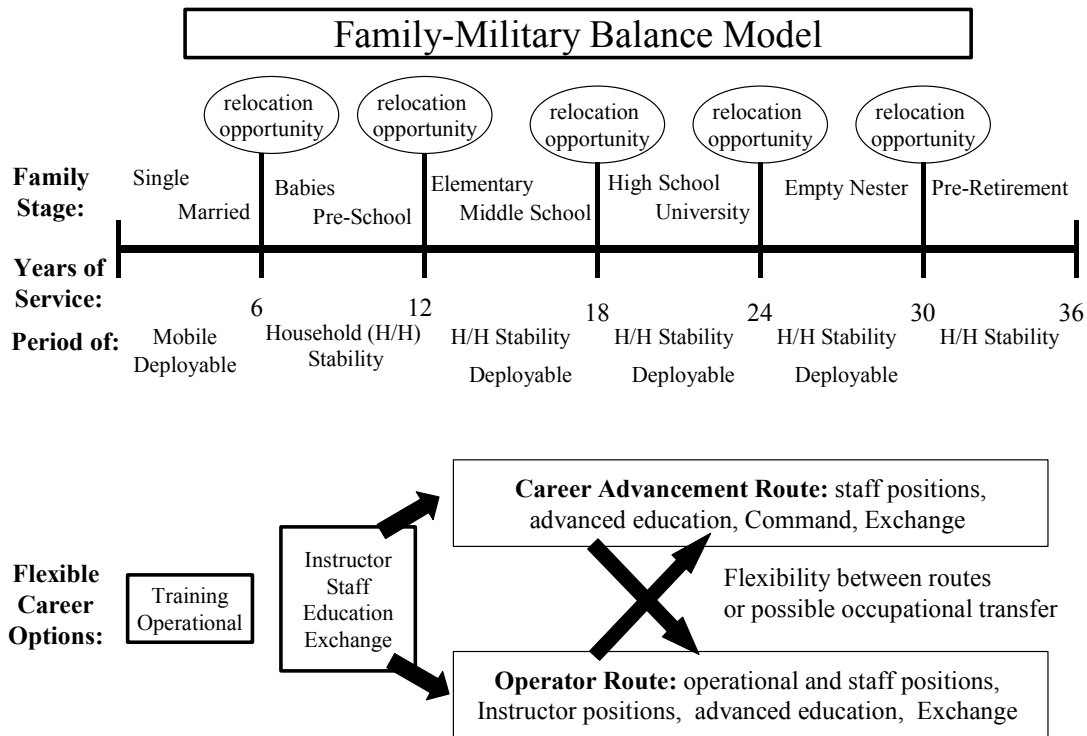


FIGURE 1 – Family-Military Balance Model

The upper half of the model identifies periods of household stability, mobility and deployability as well as ideal relocation opportunities. The years of service have been included on the planning model, but they serve as simply a guide to illustrate typical timings through a career. The critical factor is synchronizing the CF needs with the members’ family-stage. This becomes increasingly important when recruiting older, experienced personnel into the military, as these individuals would need to enter into the appropriate family-stage of the model. Flexible career options are illustrated in the lower half of the model. The model, however, is not an all-

encompassing solution. A family with many children, for example, complicates the stability-mobility-deployability issue. Likewise, single members may have their own unique requirements that may also include complex family situations. The model does, however, represent the average one-to-two child household and its family priorities. In fact, much of the model structure proposals are supported in the following retention-study observations:

Studies help to clarify some of the circumstances under which family factors may dominate family decisionmaking. First, the impact of family factors is not static, but varies over time with stage in the family life cycle, investment in a military career, and pay. At the beginning of a military career, for example, when pay is low and many personnel are not yet married, concerns over pay dominate decisionmaking. As income increases over time, crossing an adequacy threshold, and as families are formed, pay issues become relatively less important compared with family and quality of life concerns.<sup>75</sup>

Adherence to this model as a long-term career-planning guide, in combination with fixed-term contracts and flexible career paths, would satisfy the majority of employees. This effort would truly show that the CF cares about the welfare of its employees and that it is family-friendly. By solving these remaining problematic HR issues, the CF would then be poised to become an EOC.

It is important to compare the CF's current practice of front-loading non-essential training<sup>76</sup> with this model. Admittedly, there are some military classifications<sup>77</sup> that require front-loaded degreed education, however, such is not the case in the majority of occupations/trades. The CF currently has most recruits tied up for years in nonessential training prior to trade qualifications. Some of this front-end loaded training is for jobs "that personnel may not perform for many years, if at all."<sup>78</sup> School graduates, on the other hand, are ready for adventure. They "sign up so

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<sup>75</sup> Vernez, *op. cit.*, 61.

<sup>76</sup> Nonessential training is training that is not required for the specific occupation or trade of the individual nor is it essential to receive this training at this stage of a member's career.

<sup>77</sup> Some examples of these classifications are: engineering, medical, dental and law.

<sup>78</sup> DND, Project Charter..., *op. cit.*, 10.

that they can experience all those exciting things depicted on recruiting posters.”<sup>79</sup>

Unfortunately, the CF is currently sending them back to the classroom instead of into operational training and deployments. For example, the impact of front-loading university and second language training, is that many personnel will not start their essential operational/trade training until possibly their fifth year of service. By the time they have the basic qualifications necessary for their first deployment, they are in their late twenties as many occupations and trades require six to eight years to achieve full qualification.<sup>80</sup> Under the current system, a pilot, for example, could be 30 years old before his first mission as a fully qualified Crew Commander! In fact, in August of 2002, at 425 Allouette Fighter Squadron, a deployable front-line squadron, only one of 17 pilots was single. “The rest are all married, a lot of them with babies.”<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, the prime window for mobility and deployability has long since passed.

If occupational/trade qualifications and subsequent operations were front-loaded, the advantages would be numerous. CF members would be able to practice their chosen specialty sooner. The travel, adventure and excitement would occur when it is most desired. Initial deployments would come at the opportune time of the family-stage—while single or before children. The knowledge of serving members could be passed on immediately, while the experienced personnel are still serving. CF MOS has recognized the requirement to focus on operationally required competencies first.

In terms of this ‘Sailor, Soldier and Airman First’ reality, the restructure of the MOS must facilitate the framework for an earlier development of military operations-based expertise and competencies, before the assumption of wider personnel development and tasking, or the ‘joint’ tasking of personnel.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ankersen, op. cit., 14.

<sup>80</sup> DND, The Aerospace..., op. cit., 34.

<sup>81</sup> Chris Wattie. “Long Hours Take Toll On Families of CF-18 Crews,” National Post 31 August, 2002, B6.

<sup>82</sup> Department of National Defence, Issue Synopsis: MOSART Project DAOD Approval (ADM (HR-Mil), 16 October 2002), 1.

Thus, to increase the preparedness for operation roles and functions, operational-based training must be the first priority for new members. Furthermore, university education and second language training would also come at the perfect time in one's career—when they desire stability and are more likely to require the skills. Members would be more mature and better able to decide on a degree that meets their needs. The military would also have input to ensure members are obtaining degrees that are beneficial to the CF. Additionally, personnel undergoing university study could be gainfully employed<sup>83</sup> during the school break, as they would be experienced operators/employees. Moreover, a new contract/further military commitment could be drawn up commensurate with the members advanced education. Thus, non-essential training conducted later in a career coincides perfectly with the member family-stage requirements and still meets military requirements. The progression would therefore be: learn your trade, practice your trade, improve your qualifications, and then, improve your trade.

EOC-based career planning and flexibility would help solve the majority of HR concerns within the military. Family needs could be planned for and informed decisions taken. As a result, the CF would be considerably closer to EOC status and the tangible and intangible benefits afforded to an EOC. Most importantly, operational functions and roles would be enhanced or improved due to retention.

### *Section Five – Counter Arguments*

The CF understands the importance of people to the organization. They recognize the need for changes and have enacted many EOC-like policies. Some of the EOC practices and strategies recommended are 'new think' and in direct contradiction to traditional military paradigms. Therefore, counter-arguments must be considered to eliminate possible skepticism to the CFs adoption of EOC HR practices.

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<sup>83</sup> Gainful employment could include such items as reviewing doctrinal and tactical issues. This would greatly benefit military operations and headquarters, as they are not currently being attended to due to personal shortages.

Firstly, it would seem wise to keep the Forces young, vice retaining experienced personnel. Unfortunately, the highly technical skill sets and the resultant increased training expense--the fiscal reality—preclude simply recruiting to solve personnel shortages. Additionally, the diminishing workforce from which to draw new members complicates the ability to attract and recruit new members. Above all, retention is necessary to assist the CF in maintaining its operational roles and functions.

Secondly, long-term planning and individualized work agreements sounds labour intensive and too complicated for a large organization like the CF. However, numerous organizations of all sizes<sup>84</sup> across North America have achieved EOC status. The CF is already structured with an established chain of command and an individualized personnel development and evaluation reporting system. Career managers are in place to coordinate members' needs with that of the CF. Thus, the EOC practices of long-term career planning and individualized contracts are simply an enhancement of practices already in existence, thereby easing implementation. In fact the White paper states, “The Government will place more emphasis on renewable, short-term periods of service for members of the Canadian Forces. The period of service for engagements will depend upon the skills and training required to do the job.”<sup>85</sup> Additionally, the CF has already begun targeting specific, skilled and experienced personnel in occupations that are undermanned. Unique recruiting incentives are being offered based on experience and contract length—specifically in the health and aviation fields. Indeed, the CF is committed to enact policies that help retain personnel.

Sustaining and supporting personnel and their families ensures that members retain the capacity and motivation to support the CF for the duration required for the achievement of its objectives. Thus, actively supporting members is what improves the ability of the CF to maintain its operational capability.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> The smallest top one hundred company is Intecan Technosystems Inc. with 45 employees and the largest is the Bank of Nova Scotia with 34,700 employees. *A to Z...*, op. cit., 2-4.

<sup>85</sup> Department of Defence, *1994 White Paper on Defence-Chap 7-Implementing Defence Policy* (DND Policy Group, 1994), 3. Accessed 4 June 2003. Available from [http://www.forces.gc.ca/admpol/eng/doc/5119\\_e.htm](http://www.forces.gc.ca/admpol/eng/doc/5119_e.htm)

<sup>86</sup> DND, *Military HR Strategy 2020....*, op. cit., 9.

Individualized career planning that includes individualized work agreements will require time and effort. The benefits, however, are significant for both the CF and its members.

Thirdly, bilingualism and highly educated personnel are extremely important to the CF and are a department priority. With the complex operations today, this is certainly true and members at all levels could benefit from this training. The key is timing. The author fully supports the requirement for educated, bilingual personnel at all ranks, but sees the timing for such training as being critical to providing career managers, and thus the members, with more flexible options. In fact, the CF requirement for bilingualism is based on rank and occupation.<sup>87</sup> A degree, (with the exceptions previously noted), while required by officers, is not yet mandatory within the first nine years of service.<sup>88</sup> Essentially, the bilingual and degree policy, for most occupations, allow for military operations-based training and an operational tour prior to second language and university training.

Finally, mobility is necessary amongst military members. Additionally, CF demands may necessitate violating a work agreement or the family-stage cycle. These should be the exception vice the norm. In these situations, there may be some members willing to relocate, or the option of IR may be employed. Every effort, however, should be made to respect the individualized work agreements. Posting to new locations should occur during the relocation window, based on the long-term plan. Additionally, new developments may assist in reducing the number of moves. New technology and advances in communications may mean less mobility is required. The current trend towards superbases may also decrease the requirement for mobility. Centralized training for instructors, and decentralized training for members would also be beneficial as time between deployments would truly be time at home. “On-line coursing” and computer-based training would certainly assist in this endeavour and technology is moving

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<sup>87</sup> Department of National Defence, Annual Management Report: Annual Review of the Implementation of Official Languages Objective (Ottawa: DND Canada, 19 April 2002). [http://www.forces.gc.ca/hr/engraph/amr01-02\\_e.doc](http://www.forces.gc.ca/hr/engraph/amr01-02_e.doc) Note: The official language strategic plan is currently being developed. (p 29) The CF is committed to increasing the ratio of linguistically qualified military personnel by 2% per year for the next four years. (p 5)

<sup>88</sup> DND, Canadian Officership..., op. cit., I-29.

in this direction. CF positions need to be re-examined with the aim of identifying more generic positions, thereby creating more flexibility within the CF. This would assist the CF in catering to individuals' changing career aspirations and family situation--some key EOC retention-assisting practices. The EOC practices of a long-term plan, and a work agreement that includes the duration in a location, would certainly help in providing stability and identifying opportunities for relocation. Stability, cannot be ignored or dismissed as unattainable, as it is essential in solving the personnel shortfalls the CF faces. The CF is also committed to providing more geographic stability for its members.

Military career paths will be restructured to reduce the number of postings and assignments that a permanent member of the Canadian Forces can expect over a lifetime of service. This policy will result in fewer relocations, and thus ease the burden on military personnel and families, and save money for the government.<sup>89</sup>

In summary, HR practices must be dynamic. An EOC will continually analyze and modify HR policies and strategies to ensure they are current, relevant, innovative, and desirable. As the CDS, General Henault, declared in his 2001-2002 report to government:

Our people are our lifeblood, and the military demands more from its people than perhaps any other profession...we ask our men and women to be prepared to sacrifice their lives as part of their job. In return, we have an obligation to keep their needs and those of their families at the forefront of our thinking and decision-making. In today's context that means managing our operational tempo, making changes needed to address our recruiting and retention challenges, continuing to invest in our leadership and professional development, and promoting diversity.<sup>90</sup>

## *Conclusion*

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<sup>89</sup> DND, 1994 White Paper..., op. cit., 3-4.

<sup>90</sup> DND, The Aerospace..., op. cit., 39.

The purpose of this essay was to demonstrate that the CF must improve its personnel practices in order to maintain its operational role and functions. The strategies and practices of an EOC were used as a model from which the CF could achieve its goals. It was argued that the EOC model is relevant to the CF as the CF is in direct competition with other organizations for skilled employees. As a result of the challenges facing the CF for the foreseeable future, it was also demonstrated that the CF itself could benefit from being a recognized EOC.

EOCs are family-friendly employers that care about the welfare of their personnel. They will attract the talented, the knowledgeable, the thinkers and the doers. Institutions that are EOCs will not just survive the future, but will thrive. With the shrinking workforce of tomorrow, the demands of tomorrow's technology, and the challenges of tomorrow's military operations, retention of talented and experienced personnel will be critical for success. Of equal importance, the high cost of training highly skilled personnel precludes relying on recruiting alone to solve the CF personnel shortfalls. Additionally, the reality of today's military operations requires personnel that are able to deploy for extended periods of time to austere locations. Deployability requires that the families left behind have a strong support network. Household stability is therefore not only desirable, it is the right thing to do for the CF. While the CF still requires their members to have some mobility, they must ensure it is synchronized with the member's family-stage requirements.

Two specific EOC practices were recommended for the CF to implement. This essay argued that career planning must be done with each individual in the CF. The plan must also include individualized work agreements that specify the duration in a location. Ideally, members would be cognizant of their individual plan up to six years in advance. The second argument demonstrated that more flexibility is required, so that members have more options available to them within the CF over the course of their career. These practices would help in personnel retention, catering to members' needs in a manner never before practised by the CF. To synchronize the needs of the CF with those of its members, a family-stage model was introduced as a means to implement the proposed HR strategies.



HR policies and strategies must change with the changing world. Therefore, HR strategies must receive constant review and tweaking to ensure the policies, strategies and practices meet employee demands and employer requirements. Through this effort, an organization will become and remain an EOC. By becoming an EOC, the benefits of economies of scale, reduced training bills and reduced recruiting efforts would all be realized. Skilled and knowledgeable employees would be attracted and retained increasing the professionalism and operational capability of the CF. The focus could then be on operations and these operations could be safely and competently completed based on the talents and experience of CF personnel. As a result, the CF defence mission is served while taking care of its members. Therefore, in order to maintain its operational role and functions, the CF must improve its personnel practices so as to become an EOC.

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