

Canadian  
Forces  
College

Collège  
des  
Forces  
Canadiennes



## THE MILLENNIAL AND THE MILITARY

LCdr H.E. Gerrior

### JCSP 40

#### *Exercise Solo Flight*

##### **Disclaimer**

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2016.

### PCEMI 40

#### *Exercice Solo Flight*

##### **Avertissement**

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada, représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2016.

EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

**THE MILLENNIAL AND THE MILITARY**

LCdr H.E. Gerrior

*“This paper was written by a student attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfilment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions, which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”*

Word Count: 3235

*“La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale.”*

Compte de mots: 3235

## THE MILLENNIAL AND THE MILITARY

*The “people challenge” facing the Canadian Forces has created a need for a war on three fronts: first, a war for the hearts and minds of Canadians who will in the final analysis determine the future construct of the CF; second, a war for the hearts and minds of our people; and third, a war for talent which is intense and intensifying.<sup>1</sup>*

- Lieutenant General (Retired) F.R. Sutherland, former Vice Chief of Defence Staff

Personnel have continually been identified as the most valuable component of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). They are, in fact, a defence capability; the key capability to achieve mission success.<sup>2</sup> To that end, attraction, recruitment and retention are the key enablers which, if done correctly, will guarantee that we protect this capability and position ourselves to service the requirements of the Government of Canada in the future. To make certain we attract, recruit and retain the best of the best, we must look at the composition of not only today’s workforce but also that of the future. Every generation is different and they are uniquely shaped by their location in history and the different economic, sociological and demographic trends they have experienced. Each generation has had different experiences and they will have a distinct set of values, views of authority, orientation to the world, loyalty, expectations of their leadership, and ideal work environment.<sup>3</sup> The millennial generation, those born between 1980 and 2000, are now entering the labour market in considerable numbers. Millennials are different than any previous generation and are more numerous than any other, since the baby

---

<sup>1</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. *B-GL-005-100/FP-001, CFJP 1.0 - Military Personnel Management Doctrine*. Ottawa, ON: Chief of the Defence Staff, June 2008. Pg 1-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Pg v.

<sup>3</sup> Tanner, L. “Who are the Millennials?” Department of National Defence, Defence Research and Development Canada. December 2010. Pg.9.

boomer generation. By 2020 Millennials will form 50% of the global workforce.<sup>4</sup> So, without a doubt they will have a huge impact on the future workforce. If we want to attract, recruit and retain the best of the best, we must be willing to take a hard look at the multiple issues that will affect their attraction, recruitment and retention and advance our HR policies – so that we may be an employer of choice for this generation.

In 2006, through the promulgation of the Canada First Defence Strategy, the Government of Canada established personnel levels for the Canadian Armed Forces of 68,000 for the Regular Force with future growth to 70,000 and 30,000 for the Reserve Force<sup>5</sup> in order to perform their assigned objectives.<sup>6</sup> To maintain those personnel levels with top talent, understanding that future forecasts suggest that 75% of the workforce in Canada will consist of Millennials by the year 2028, and knowing that we will have to compete with the civilian labour market for the brightest, the CAF must ensure that its personnel management doctrine aligns with those values and traits that the millennial generation deem essential. This will be challenging. The CAF, as a military organization, has a clear chain of command and is steeped in military heritage and tradition. The CAF has customs and ceremonies that are meant to stand the test of time. They require individuals to deploy, as operations are our primary focus. There are rules and CAF personnel are disciplined. By its very nature, it is not flexible and as a government organization, they are slow to change and are very bureaucratic. CAF personnel management doctrine states that it is integrated and coordinated to ensure

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/managing-tomorrows-people/future-of-work/assets/reshaping-the-workplace.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.forces.gc.ca/assets/FORCES\\_Internet/docs/en/about/CFDS-SDCD-eng.pdf](http://www.forces.gc.ca/assets/FORCES_Internet/docs/en/about/CFDS-SDCD-eng.pdf). Pg 15.

<sup>6</sup> <http://business.financialpost.com/executive/careers/like-it-or-not-millennials-will-change-the-workplace>

alignment with legislation, regulations, strategic goals and other personnel policies and that in addition to being legislatively compliant and consistent with the direction of CF higher authority, they reflect and support the fundamental values, beliefs, and expectations embodied in the military ethos and the social contract.<sup>7</sup> These facts become concerning when we look at the values and traits the millennial generation bring to the workplace and when we look at the results of a Harvard poll which shows that Millennials have lost trust in a variety of public institutions including the President, the military, Congress, the Supreme Court, and the federal government as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, the CAF has a lot of work to do. Harvard University's Institute of Politics found that Millennials have less trust in government than ever before<sup>9</sup> so it is evident that the CAF must focus on developing credibility and trust and becoming an employer of choice by addressing their concerns and requirements for employment.

From the moment millennial children were born, their parents have been “cooing and coddling them like crazy.”<sup>10</sup> Their parents have provided them with a tremendous amount of affection and when this affection is combined with two parents who are dual earners and their associated guilt, Millennials not only get what they want materialistically but have become the center of their parents’ lives. With time, Millennials have also experienced less structure within the family, so it is important for this

---

<sup>7</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. *B-GL-005-100/FP-001, CFJP 1.0 - Military Personnel Management Doctrine*. Ottawa, ON: Chief of the Defence Staff, June 2008. Pg 7-1.

<sup>8</sup> Business Insider. “Harvard Poll Shows Millennials Have 'Historically Low' Levels Of Trust In Government.” last accessed, 20 April 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/poll-millennials-have-historically-low-levels-of-trust-in-government-2014-4>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Tanner, L. “Who are the Millennials?” Department of National Defence, Defence Research and Development Canada. December 2010. Pg. 19.

generation to stay connected with their families.<sup>11</sup> Rather than growing up, leaving home and moving away from their parents, millennials report being very close to their parents with roughly 80% saying they have spoken to their parents within the last day, 75% seeing their parents at least once a week and 50% saying that they see their parents daily.<sup>12</sup> Millennials want to make a life, not make a living.<sup>13</sup> So, considering that personnel are required to leave home immediately upon enrollment for their Basic Training for two to three months, that CAF members are posted throughout their careers and will likely have to move away from friends and family and that they will have to deploy from their immediate family for periods of up to a year may make the CAF a difficult choice for Millennials. It is important to understand this and as the CAF has recently seen a decrease in cost moves, this could potentially mean that Millennials would be able to establish themselves in one location for some time. Ideally this location would be close to home and family.

Millennials have grown up in the e-commerce age and have seen greater technological advances than ever before.<sup>14</sup> Their world has always included personal computers, laptops, the Internet, CDs, DVDs, ATMs, cellular phones, pagers, and digital cameras.<sup>15</sup> It is almost mandatory that teenagers possess at least one personal electronic device. Cell phones interrupt school classes and students fail to turn in papers because laptops crash. They have been highly influenced by and are even dependent upon today's

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Pg. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ng, Eddy S.W., and Linda Schweitzer and Sean T. Lyons. "New Generation, Great Expectations: A Field Study of the Millennial Generation." *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Volume 25, Issue 2, (June 2010): 281-292.

<sup>14</sup> Tanner, L. "Who are the Millennials?" Department of National Defence, Defence Research and Development Canada. December 2010. Pg. 15.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

technology, with particular importance placed upon communications technology. They are the first generation since the introduction of television to rely less on media for information, believing that they can access information quicker and better. The rise in social networking platforms such as Google, Instagram, Myspace, Ask and Facebook are not used on an occasional basis by Millennials. They are a lifestyle, as Millennials feel the need to be connected all the time, through a variety of applications. They are constantly plugged in to a world of communication and information at their fingertips. They are “hyper-communicators” who use multiple applications, often simultaneously, to communicate who they are, what they think, and how they live.<sup>16</sup>

When Millennials have questions or are wondering about an issue, they utilize the internet to access whatever information they can find. The internet provides a wealth of information and immediate answers to whatever questions are concerning them at any point in time. Other generations had to ask their parents, wait and go to a library or perhaps consult books or encyclopaedias. The various search engines that are available to Millennials allow them to locate information efficiently, and spreadsheets, databases, and concept maps help them to organize, interpret and use information in new ways.<sup>17</sup> Millennials have an uncanny ability to search through information, sift through it quickly and at the same time, be critical of the various information sources from which they are obtaining the information.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

What has the CAF done to attract, recruit and retain these techies? Do they have a place in the CAF? Research suggests they do. The future security environment will only contain more technology based weapons and communications systems and whether at home or abroad, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities will remain essential in maintaining situational awareness in a world where sensing technology is becoming increasingly pervasive and universally available. Communications will remain essential in ensuring command and control.<sup>19</sup> Therefore the military advantage will belong to those who are best able to acquire, integrate, and exploit new capabilities the fastest.<sup>20</sup> These technology savvy Millennials would be the ideal fit for Canada's military. However, the CAF may not be where it should to attract, recruit and retain these hyper communicators. While the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group advertises videos with great employment opportunities and has developed an interactive website, the reality is that the recruiting process takes a long time and greater progress must be made with the website for it to be considered effective by Millennials standards. The current recruiting system is rigid, inflexible and does not respond with any efficiency. Lastly, the skills sets that the Millennials possess and that the CAF could utilize should be marketed better.

The millennial generation is more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse than any previous generation.<sup>21</sup> They are also the most technology-fluent, multitasking, adaptable and team oriented group of workers in history.<sup>22</sup> These are great qualities and being affluent and educated could be good for the CAF as they pay well,

---

<sup>19</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. *The Future Security Environment 2008-2030 Part 1: Current and Emerging Trends* (FSE 1). Ottawa, ON: Chief of Force Development, January 2009. Pg 91.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Pg 8.

<sup>21</sup> Tanner, L. "Who are the Millennials?" Department of National Defence, Defence Research and Development Canada. December 2010. Pg. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



have an excellent pension plan and provide opportunities for continuous education. Millennials want to customize their benefits, so perhaps the CAF would be wise to research various benefits to see if customizing would be an option. Millennials want to experience as much training as possible, so the CAF has to be cognisant about engaging Millennials at levels with development opportunities. Here the CAF could focus on building and measuring the effectiveness of mentoring programmes alongside other learning and education opportunities. There is an excellent initiative currently underway in MARLANT where two different junior officers can attend the bi-weekly Formation Executive Meetings to gain experience on big issues and to witness the discussions and the emerging issues that need to be addressed by senior leadership. This is an excellent way to see how the organization works, how they can make a difference, and provides a window to where they could potentially end up if they remain in the CAF. This should occur more frequently throughout the organization.

Millennials like to multitask and are team oriented, which are perfect skill sets and mesh well with the CAF requirements. The research shows that Millennials are looking for suitable employers, not just suitable jobs<sup>23</sup> and some of the most important characteristics of ideal employers are a progressive work environment, where the atmosphere is more casual, hours more flexible, and incentives are offered, such as better maternity leave or appealing office locations. Therefore, the CAF would do well to better address some of these issues. The CAF does not have a progressive work environment, the atmosphere is rarely casual and wearing a uniform is mandatory. Even the dress code

---

<sup>23</sup> Tanner, L. "Who are the Millennials?" Department of National Defence, Defence Research and Development Canada. December 2010. Pg. 43.

on Fridays and at the mess, where one should be more casual, would not likely work for Millennials. Given that a recent Millennial branding study reported that 45% of Millennials will choose workplace flexibility over pay and that 72% want to have a job where they can have an impact, the CAF would be wise to focus on its flexibility.<sup>24</sup> Millennials want flexibility and while it is espoused as a principle of CAF Military Personnel Management System, it could easily be argued that there is very little flexibility in such a bureaucratic system. The CAF is fairly rigid, both in terms of its policy as well as its workplace culture. Millennials want more flexible hours and the ability to work remotely; they want to set their own hours and dress how they want; and they believe they can teach older workers and their bosses a thing or two.<sup>25</sup> The managers that drive Millennials crazy are those that micromanage, quash their spirit, discount their ideas, are condescending, are inconsistent and disorganize, don't recognize the skills they bring to the workplace and those that are cynical.<sup>26</sup> The CAF culture is hierarchical and Millennials thrive when work is carried out in more collaborative ways. Millennials perform better in a more flexible environment where the result and impact of their work are given more weight than the time they spend tied to their desks. The role work plays in people's lives has shifted. The way Millennials get things done is changing.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly enough, there is a significant gap between perception and reality when it comes to the promises made by employers on diversity and work/life balance. The CAF is an organization that pays lip service to flexible work hours. There is an expectation

---

<sup>24</sup> <http://business.financialpost.com/executive/careers/like-it-or-not-millennials-will-change-the-workplace>

<sup>25</sup> <http://business.financialpost.com/executive/careers/like-it-or-not-millennials-will-change-the-workplace>

<sup>26</sup> Raines, C., and Arleen Arnsparger. "Millennials at Work." 2010. [http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles\\_millennials\\_at\\_work.php](http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles_millennials_at_work.php)

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

that you put in at least 8 hours of work and are always at your desk or else you are not working hard enough. Senior leaders arrive to work extremely early, and often work late and on the weekends. It is clear that if you want to succeed, you must be willing to deploy and put in long hours. The job never ends and that may be a tough sell for the Millennials as their family time is important to them. The CAF does not have flexible work weeks, cannot generally take leave without pay, normally do not work from home, etc... It would be wise for the CAF to create a culture where there is flexibility in the actual policies, much like the benefits the public service have. Millennials work well with clear instructions and concrete targets. If you know what you want done by when, why does it matter where and how they complete the task? They should be provided the freedom they need to have a flexible work schedule. It should not matter if they work from home, a coffee shop or wherever if they are most productive. Within the CAF culture though, there are too many supervisors and managers who simply cannot accept these types of principles as they are too set in their ways. Individuals within the system lack flexibility, similar to the policies. If deadlines are set and if they meet them, why worry about the tactics used and the time they clock in and out?

The CAF's policies are fragmented and out of date which leads to confusion. There are so many outstanding grievances that the CDS had to launch OP RESOLUTION. If the CAF wants to continue to attract Millennials, this bureaucratic policy issue has to be addressed. It may simply mean updating current policies, however I would suggest that many need to be revamped. The CAF should also review the messages they are sending out and test them against the reality of the employee

experience. The recent Sexual Harassment Report is a prime example of where the message does not match the reality of people's experience.

Millennials want and value frequent feedback. Unlike past generations where people received annual reviews, Millennials want to know how they're doing on a much more regular basis. In fact, they want honest feedback in real time and highlighting their positive contributions is essential. In the workplace, collaboration, personal involvement, and trust are critical to creating engagement.<sup>28</sup> What motivates Millennials are managers who connect actions to personal and career goals. The work environment in most organizations include bureaucracy, straight lines, one size fits all, tenured leaders, yearly reviews, security, and privacy. The work environment that engages most Millennials includes ease and speed, web-like can be customized, competent, trustworthy leaders, weekly, even daily, feedback, an and open flow of information.<sup>29</sup> Suffice it to say, the PDR process alone would not meet what Millennials are looking for. The PDR process is not robust and failure to follow it is frequently seen without any ramifications. The PDR process should be revisited and managers should gain an understanding of the new generation and engage with them on a regular basis and make the difference. In order for employees to be engaged, they must share a sense of belonging and of being part of something important. They need to trust that management is focused on the best interests of the organization and those who work there.

The traits Millennials possess that are highly suited to the CAFs characteristics

---

<sup>28</sup> Raines, C., and Arleen Arnsperger. "Millennials at Work." 2010.  
[http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles\\_millennials\\_at\\_work.php](http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles_millennials_at_work.php)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

and values are leadership, high ethical standards, strong culture, and social responsibility. Research also indicates that Millennials need to have a sense that they are moving toward something and gaining a variety of experiences. The CAF therefore needs to challenge them to come up with new ways to streamline processes and to exercise their creativity. We need to understand their personal and professional goals. The CAF's posting cycle meets this criteria to a certain degree. Every two to three years they will have a new position to challenge them, and even during any posting cycle they can volunteer for a tour, to be on a project team for a certain duration and can even volunteer for such things as being part of a BOI. As the CAF already does this, we need to make sure we market it to Millennials so that it boosts attraction and retention. In many respects this meets Millennials needs for special rotational assignments more frequently than most organizations. Also, as Millennials have a strong desire to work overseas, this is an excellent opportunity for the CAF to exploit.

It's inevitable that the rate of churn among Millennials will be higher than among other generations, especially since many have made compromises in finding their first job, and this should be built into the CAF retention plans. Do we have the option of retaining them if they choose to leave the Regular Force? Perhaps in the Reserves? Even on a Class A basis? To transfer in and out of the Regular Force is not easy, flexible or quick. Some personnel have to wait longer than two years to transfer. Having more flexible HR policies in this regard would go a long way as Millennials may want to move back and forth as jobs in the civilian world wax and wane. It is unfortunate that the current construct does not allow for this and that Reserve establishments are not set up to retain them due to the limited number of positions they can have.

The CAF states that their sailors, soldiers, airmen and airwomen are the heart and soul of the military mission.<sup>30</sup> So, to support the heart and soul of the mission means understanding them and progressing the organization with policy and a culture that supports their attraction, recruitment and retention so that they obtain what they need out of the organization as well. This sounds much easier than it actually is, especially when the current organization has a large number of personnel from older generations who simply cannot or will not adapt and do not like the changes this new generation are bringing to the workplace. It is important to understand and address generational differences and tensions and to develop credibility and trust. The department must work on changing their policies to make the CAF more appealing. Reviewing and updating CAF policies, workplace culture and having a robust, yet flexible system is vital. If the CAF envisions “an intelligent, fully-integrated, mission adaptable, technology enabled, combat effective force” for the future,<sup>31</sup> then surely, Millennials have a place. We only have one chance to get it right and if we fail our credibility is lost. Therefore we must act now to ensure our HR policies work with and for the new generation.

---

<sup>30</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence. *B-GL-005-100/FP-001, CFJP 1.0 - Military Personnel Management Doctrine*. Ottawa, ON: Chief of the Defence Staff, June 2008. Pg 1-3.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., Pg 1-2.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bibby, Reginald W. "Canada's Emerging Millennials." *Transition* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 2-6. Driedger, Leo. "Multiculturalism: Sorting Identities, Rights, and Conflicts." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 43, no. 1/2 (2011): 221-236.
- Business Insider. "Harvard Poll Shows Millennials Have 'Historically Low' Levels Of Trust In Government." last accessed, 20 April 2015.  
<http://www.businessinsider.com/poll-millennials-have-historically-low-levels-of-trust-in-government-2014-4>.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. *B-GL-005-100/FP-001, CFJP 1.0 - Military Personnel Management Doctrine*. Ottawa, ON: Chief of the Defence Staff, June 2008.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. *The Future Security Environment 2008-2030 Part 1: Current and Emerging Trends* (FSE 1). Ottawa, ON: Chief of Force Development, January 2009.
- Chong, Ernest. "Putting Diversity in Uniform: A Brief Examination of Visible Minority Recruitment in the Canadian Forces." *Public Policy & Governance Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (Winter 2010). 37-50.
- Larrabee, Amy and Erica Robinson. "Ready or Not, Here They Come: Motivating and Retaining the Millennial Generation." Bell Oaks Executive Search
- Lund, J.J. "Recruiting the Millennial Generation." Department of National Defence, Defence Science Advisory Board. DSAB report 1106, December 2013.
- Myers, Karen K. and Kamyab Sadaghiani. "Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials' Organizational Relationships and Performance." *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Volume 25, Issue 2, (June 2010). 225-238.
- Ng, Eddy S.W., and Charles W. Gossett. "Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit with the Millennial Generation." *Public Personnel Management* 42, no. 3 (September 2013): 337-358.
- Ng, Eddy S.W., and Linda Schweitzer and Sean T. Lyons. "New Generation, Great Expectations: A Field Study of the Millennial Generation." *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Volume 25, Issue 2, (June 2010): 281-292.
- Raines, C. "Managing millennials." *Connecting Generations: The Sourcebook*, 2002.  
<http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles/millennials.htm>

Raines, C., and Arleen Arnsparger. "Millennials at Work." 2010.

[http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles\\_millennials\\_at\\_work.php](http://www.generationsatwork.com/articles_millennials_at_work.php)

Tanner, L. "Who are the Millennials?" Department of National Defence, Defence Research and Development Canada. December 2010.