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## THE CAF'S GREATEST CHALLENGE : RETENTION CULTURE

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**THE CAF'S GREATEST CHALLENGE: RETENTION CULTURE**

By Major Vivian El-Beltagy

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*“Leadership is about people. Remember that, and you have the foundation that will set you up on your way to becoming successful and having enormous potential to conquer future challenges. Forget that focus and you have taken the first step toward failure.”<sup>1</sup>*

*-- General Rick Hillier, Chief of Defence Staff*

## INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is not a job. It is not merely a recruiting center. It is not a temporary parking spot until one figures out what to do in life. It is more. It is you and me and our duty and honour to serve this country. It is my life. In a perfect world, these are the words we would like to hear from those who join the military. Over the years, the public and CAF mindset moved from a culture of “I belong to this organization and I belong here” to one where it is a transient phase in life until something better and more convenient comes along. The day that members began calculating their remaining time left to serve to be in receipt of a minimum pension or even for a severance package much earlier than pensionable time, was the turning point for the military. It was a critical moment for the member too to have reached a crossroad in his/her career. It was a point when the CAF realized that a retention culture was in jeopardy. It was the day the CAF came to the realization that without a retention strategy, the Canadian military as an institution would fall behind; because without its members, there is no CAF.

A recruiting project was stood up in 2000 to address shortages in several key military occupations caused by both the drop in recruiting numbers and an increase in attrition rates.<sup>2</sup> While the majority of the effort was placed on increased recruiting and addressing the attrition and short-term retention in key branches, not as much effort was directed towards long-term

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<sup>1</sup>Hillier, Rick, General, “Leadership: 50 Points of Wisdom for Today’s Leader” (HarperCollins: United States, 2010), 17-18.

<sup>2</sup>Morrow, Rob, Major, NATO, “Recruiting and Retention of Military Personnel,” [https://www.nato.int/issues/women\\_nato/Recruiting%20&%20Retention%20of%20Mil%20Personnel.pdf](https://www.nato.int/issues/women_nato/Recruiting%20&%20Retention%20of%20Mil%20Personnel.pdf), Last modified October 2007, 42.

retention. Signing bonuses were introduced to attract members to enroll, but those bonuses were essentially presented to solve a gap issue. Incentives were offered for some to mitigate training phases that could have taken anywhere from 3 to 5 years in some occupations. Some of these strategies addressed the short-term retention. One example of a short-term retention strategy employed was through offering an extension bonus to serving members, and in return, the member would sign a contract to serve a minimum number of additional years. But the long-term strategy of retaining those members was never formally designed and put into place.

Furthermore, the attraction strategies focused more on cost-avoidance. Cost-avoidance meant keeping trained personnel vice recruiting new ones off the street. Through this strategy, the CAF avoided the Recruiting Centres' staffing timeframes to complete a recruit's file, cost of recruit training and more importantly the cost of bringing the member from untrained to reaching full occupational capability (FOC). One example of successful attraction and recruitment was to bring members in as Direct Entry Officers or Trained/Skilled Members. These members had the requisite education level and training to be more quickly injected into the workplace and to operate independently. This meant that right after recruit training, they would be commissioned or promoted and be posted against a substantive position. The immediate promotion post basic recruit training meant an increase in pay, much faster than the traditional path of needing to complete the various levels of trainings and qualifications. Another example was to give trained pilots approximately \$75K to remain in the Service another five years, if they were close to the end of their Terms of Service (TOS). This initiative worked well to retain members short-term in the hopes that within this time-frame, there would be other members trained and promoted to fill the gap of those releasing.

Several Quality of Life (QOL) initiatives were studied and initiated to address dissatisfiers that members were feeling or experiencing. Those dissatisfactions, identified by Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (SCONDVA) upon the Minister of National Defence's request, fell into five domains:

- Satisfaction with state of health;
- Satisfaction with their family and social life;
- Satisfaction with their residence, neighbourhood and general living environment;
- Satisfaction with how they spend their leisure time and how they see their
- personal development; and
- Satisfaction with their work environment and their professional development.<sup>3</sup>

The study under SCONDVA made 89 recommendations in direct relation to the QOL. However, there were no timelines set for completion. Some of these recommendations dealt with geo-location of members due to compassionate (family) reasons; availability of military housing to junior members; or, the subsidized education plan to boost a member's personal and professional development. But despite some of these initiatives, a long-term performance measurement tool was not used to follow up on the initiatives' efficacy. Furthermore, the progressing decline in retention of members remained and arguably increased in certain occupations, more than others.

Why does attrition matter? Why does the CAF not just ramp up recruiting and fill the necessary positions with new blood and promote into the vacated positions? The easiest answer lies in the old adage: How long does it take to train a CWO with 25 years of experience?

Attrition is expensive and time consuming; with the loss of skill from previous training,

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<sup>3</sup>Chief of Review Services, "Review of Quality of Life Project Management," Last modified March 2004, <http://www.crs-csex.forces.gc.ca/reports-rapports/pdf/2004/P0235-eng.pdf>.

experience, organizational culture knowledge, the direct and indirect costs of replacing an individual as well as the negative impact on operational capability and capacity.

In this paper, I argue that the CAF faces institutional barriers preventing a healthy retention culture, thus leading to unscheduled and unexpected attrition. Furthermore, these unscheduled losses are not accounted for early enough to address their backfills by the recruiting centers, by career managers or through the Strategic Intake Plan (SIP). Through release interviews, when conducted, or through the self-identification reasons behind the releases, members are releasing for reasons of: competition with the private industry, a growing need for geographical stability, and fatigue due to strong emphasis being placed on the mission without being supplied the appropriate resources to meet mission success. The absence of feeling that a member can co-own his/her career, thereby having a true say in selecting an upcoming posting or deployment or even formal training for legitimate and logical reasons, hinders the sense of having any control over one's career. Retention strategies need to be initiated and implemented to ensure that the CAF remains an operationally viable organization that is also attractive to members. It must develop the means and ways to attract Canadian citizens to join, ensuring it recruits those who really want to be part of the institution and wish to be part of the fight behind the mission of the CAF.

This paper will explore various retention strategies that have been and currently are being employed within the CAF while analyzing the various strategies being applied in foreign Defence and in the private sector. By highlighting the major difference and key elements missing from the CAF strategies, we can begin to highlight the common themes in how the CAF differs and through what dimensions (leadership, family, professional / personal development, etc.). Following this introduction, major reasons behind some of the Releases which the CAF has

experienced will be presented. A study of the occupations in most distress will be used to find out the reasons affecting release in those occupations and if any strategies have been suggested to lower attrition rates. Subsequently, the “Your-Say Survey” will be introduced and results of what the members had to say about what they thought or how they felt about various human resource issues. Thereafter, using the Release reasons provided by the members along with the results of the “Your-Say Survey,” certain related or overlapping factors will be analyzed against relativity and effect on retention. Those factors will then be matched to the major reasons for attrition. The second last chapter will conclude with the major factors that have greatly contributed to a decline in the overall CAF retention culture. It will be critical to explain those factors in detail to have a better understanding as to when those variables become the deciding factors during one’s career and ultimately lead the member to the exit doors. Finally, this paper will make recommendations on various retention strategies that can be put into place in the near future to not only slow down attrition but to provide for a healthier retention culture.

The latest Canadian Defence policy, released in 2017, affirmed the problem with retention: “The current system is too slow to compete in Canada’s highly competitive labour market and does not effectively communicate the exciting and fulfilling employment opportunities offered by military service.”<sup>4</sup> The commitment to reinvest in the military’s capabilities and members required the stand up of a directorate, called The Journey, to review and improve the CAF retention rates. The Journey has commenced with taking a closer look at why historical CAF retention strategies did not work. It has been mandated to redesign the CAF organization to give members an improved QOL, the sense of co-owning their career through open dialogue with their respective leaders and career managers and to give the members the

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<sup>4</sup>Canada. Department of National Defence, “Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy,” <http://dgpapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>, (DND: Ottawa, 2017), 20.



option of drawing their own career path from working full time to part time and from being deployable to temporarily opting out from deployments.

## CHAPTER 1 – THEIR VOICE

The CAF lacks formal advancement strategies to effect increased retention in all of its distinct Branches. However, before it is possible to suggest retention strategies, it is necessary to examine what may be the individual and organizational causes of attrition. Members' contribution to the organization could be argued as directly linked to their commitment to the organization or commitment to the organization's mission and objectives. For this paper I will use the Allen and Meyer (1997) definition of commitment. They define commitment as a "psychological state that characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization, and has implications for the decision to continue membership in the organization."<sup>5</sup> To further explain why members would commit to an organization, they focused on three components that contributed directly to level of commitment: affective, continuance and normative.<sup>6</sup> Affective commitment was defined as the emotional attachment and/or identity to the organization. The 2016 CAF Retention Survey reported between 57.5% and 83.9% of the 1956 respondents working under Affective Commitment.<sup>7</sup> Continuance commitment was linked with the reality of the cost of leaving the organization (financial hardship as an example). The Retention Survey demonstrated between 42.7% and 61% reported continuance commitment for why they were still serving.<sup>8</sup> Finally, normative commitment was the feeling of being obligated to remain part of the organization. The Retention Survey reported between 29.6% and 65.3% of CAF members serving under normative commitment.<sup>9</sup> These three components of commitment do not act equally at any given time on an individual's commitment level. For example, one member's

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<sup>5</sup>John P. Meyer and Natalie J. Allen, *Commitment in the Workplace* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, 1997), 11.

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

<sup>7</sup>Nicholas Bremmer and Glen Budgell, *The 2016 CAF Retention Survey: Descriptive Analysis* (Ottawa: Human Resource Systems Group Ltd, 2017), 71.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 72.

financial hardships could outweigh his or her level of emotional attachment to the organization, but a promotion and subsequent raise may alleviate the financial pressure. Therefore, varying levels of these components drive the degree of commitment of a member and likely vary across the stages of a person's life and career. This is an important point to keep in mind because it suggests that retention strategies are not universal and what may work at a given time, may not work at another with the same individual. In the CAF, since the affective commitment was the highest, heavier focus needs to be placed on efforts to increase normative commitment. Thus, to foster an appropriate level of commitment, there may have to be an array of attractive tools in place to not only attract but also retain the member in the institution.

But how does the CAF begin to do this? This must be seen through the lens of the institution's Human Resource (HR) system. Dr. Alan Okros states, "the primary focus of any HR Management System is to ensure that the organization's workforce can accomplish assigned tasks and achieve intended objectives."<sup>10</sup> One must also remember in the context of this paper, that the CAF is a very different institution than that of any in the private sector. No other organization requires unlimited liability of its employees where they place the lives of others ahead of their own.<sup>11</sup> The uniqueness of such an organization requires the member to essentially serve the organization and its mission ahead of oneself. This condition must therefore be met with full appreciation of the physiological demands and pressures endured by the individuals who are willing to work as the CAF requires. The organization must also define its organizational strategy, that which "outlines the organization's goals and the means for attaining these goals. The strategy the organization is pursuing...will influence the power of various work

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<sup>10</sup> Craig Stone, *The Public Management of Defence in Canada* (Toronto: Breakout Educational Network, 2009), 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

groups.”<sup>12</sup> This power will be the driving force behind the organization’s leadership in deciding who will be allocated what resources for doing the job which the CAF is asking for.<sup>13</sup> In the CAF Retention Survey conducted in 2016, there was implied need for improvement in how the organization distributes opportunities and resources.<sup>14</sup> Prior to looking at what resources could be invested and what strategies may be initiated, an understanding of the shortcomings an organization has towards its members must be attained. In order to answer this question, a review of the dissatisfiers needs to be made to appropriately classify the major reasons behind the unexpected releases. A series of surveys conducted with serving members will be examined for commonalities or themes to help identify the most important retention factors. These are the Your Say survey, the Exit survey and the Retention survey.

In 2003, a survey called, “Your-Say” was developed to capture the opinions of randomly selected Regular and Reserve Force members on varying topics of importance to the CAF. The 2008 Your-Say survey contained thirteen military-related items that reflect retention issues. It is important to note that the 2008 survey did not capture gender specific responses. However, it collected the responses of Non-Commissioned members (NCM) and Officers, of all ranks. The top 6 military-related reasons contributing to dissatisfaction were: the promotion system (44.1%), career management (38.6%), career progression (33.2%), recognition you receive from your organization (32.2%), opportunities for professional development (28.2%) and posting frequency (24.5%).<sup>15</sup> When focus was placed on career management and postings, as they are main drivers of employment in the CAF, of those surveyed, 42% did not feel they had personal

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen P. Robbins and Nancy Langton, *Organizational Behaviour: Concepts, Controversies, Applications*, Second ed. (Toronto: Pearson Education Canada Inc., 2001), 207-208.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Bremmer and Glen Budgell, *The 2016 CAF Retention Survey: Descriptive Analysis* (Ottawa: Human Resource Systems Group Ltd, 2017), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Samantha Urban, *Your-Say: Spring 2008 Results* (Ottawa: DGMPPRA-DND, 2010), 17.

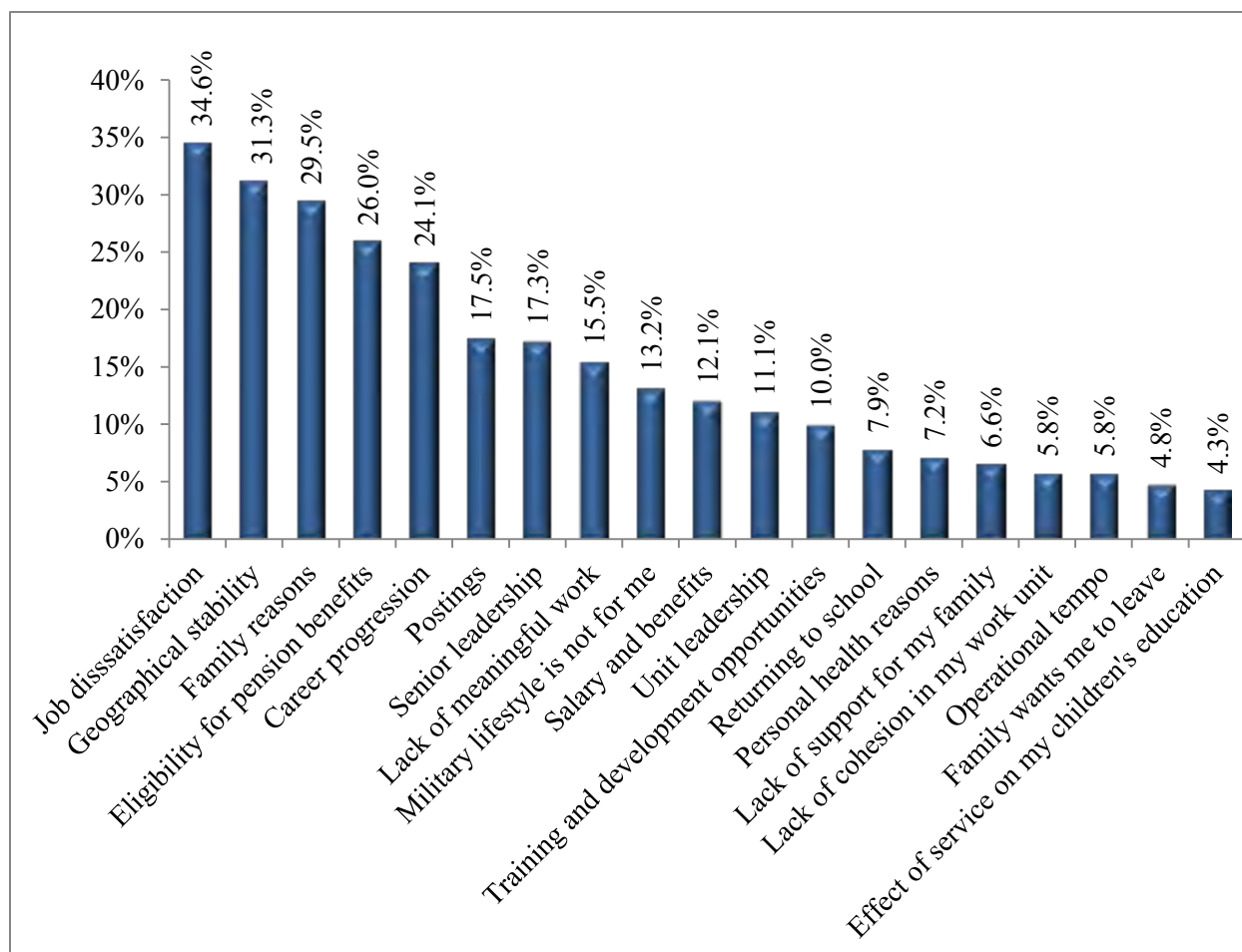
control over their career and 36.5% said that postings were having negative effects on their children's education with 23% saying the negative effects were on their spouse's employment, while 9.9% wanted more geographical stability.<sup>16</sup>

An Exit-Survey was administered for those Regular Force members releasing from the CAF between mid-2013 and early 2017. Table 1 below outlines recurring themes behind those dissatisfaction factors in the 2008 Your-Say Survey and this Exit-Survey. Of those completing the survey and identifying their reasons to leave, the results show that the top six factors were, in descending order of highest discontent: job dissatisfaction, geographical stability, family reasons (could be due to children or spouse's needs), eligibility for pension benefits, career progression and postings. With the exception of pension benefits, the overlap between the 2008 Your-Say Survey and this Exit Survey is made on all other top named factors. However, eligibility for pension benefits should not be discounted as a factor because military members do make the decision to leave the institution on a voluntary basis in what is referred to as dysfunction turnover; that which is defined as "when a high performing / not easily replaceable employee leaves."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, this factor becomes quite important in that the CAF could have retained the member past their 20 years of service (for those members grandfathered under the former TOS) or 25 year pensionable service, and leveraged their knowledge and experience.

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<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>17</sup>Irina Goldenberg, "Presentation: DGMP Handover: Retention Research," Ottawa: 16 April 2017.

**Table 1: Exit Survey Data: Reasons for Voluntary Release<sup>18</sup>**

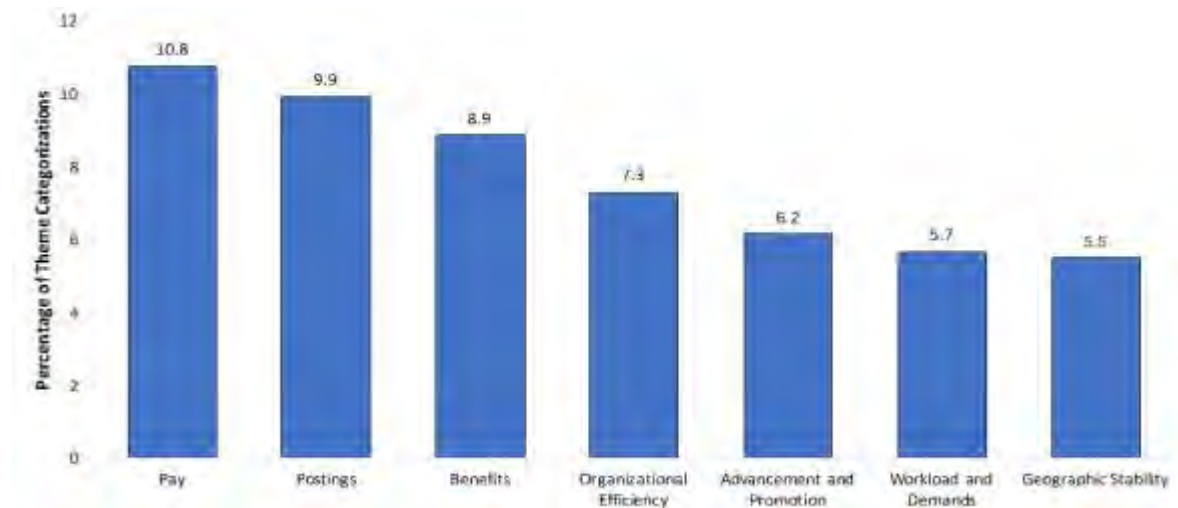
Finally, the CAF retention survey was conducted as well in 2016 asking members what would be the most important factors for them to continue serving in the CAF. Interestingly, the highest seven reported factors included pay, postings, benefits, organizational efficiency, advancement and promotion, workload and demands, and geographic stability, respectively. Table 2 gives the overall percentage of each of these factors. One can see how there is strong linkage between the factors that could increase retention and those that were identified during the release process.

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

This link only confirms that the absence of the dominating factors that would convince a member to prolong their service are somewhat similar to those that contributed to their voluntary release.

**Table 2: 2016 CAF Retention Survey: “If you are considering leaving the CAF in the next five years for reasons other than retirement, what changes could the CAF make to persuade you to stay?” (1,493 responses)<sup>19</sup>**



When compared to the data collected on Reserve Force members, Table 3 portrays the data of those members that self-identified the reasons for their voluntary releases.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

Table 3 - 2015 CAF Primary Reserve Retention Survey<sup>20</sup>

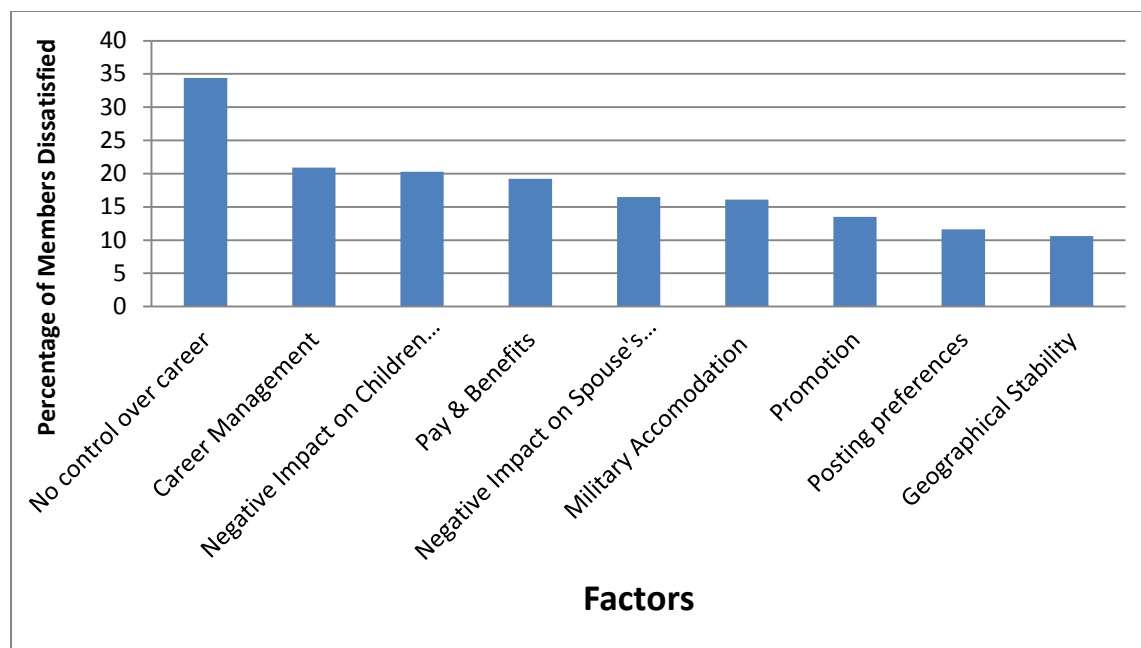


Table 4 presents the 2015/2016 Your-Say Survey responses of Regular Force members.

The survey results on each of these years were somewhat consistent and therefore were included together in the 2016 Result survey. Sample data consisted of 4,076 respondents. The top factors that were considered important dissatisfiers are displayed in Table 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



**Table 4 – 2015/2016 Your-Say Result survey<sup>21</sup>**

A summary of the top dissatisfying factors between the Your-Say surveys of 2008 and 2015/2016 demonstrates an overlap of all the reasons already mentioned, such as career management, negative impact on children's education and spouse's career, pay and benefits, promotion and geographical stability. Interestingly, a new factor of dissatisfaction is introduced in Table 3 that is of significance: members who feel they have no control over their career (34.4%).<sup>22</sup> The number of members feeling like this is quite high and compared to the other factors of dissatisfaction, it is quite dramatic. When comparing the Your-Say factors and the Exit survey, there is clear overlap that the reasons behind members' dissatisfactions were in actual fact the reasons that highly contributed to their release.

We can see that there is a recurring theme between Table 1 and Table 3, in that out of the top six reasons for their departure, those reasons are due to lack of opportunities, job dissatisfaction and family-related. These are summarized in Table 5.

<sup>21</sup> Carina Daugherty, *Your-Say: Spring 2016 Results* (Ottawa: DGMPPRA-DND, 2017), 22-23.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

**Table 5: Summary of Main Factors Affecting Attrition in the CAF**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Your-Say Surveys</b>	<b>Exit Survey</b>	<b>2016 Retention Survey</b>
Co-owning one's career	x		
Career management	x	x	
Impact on children's education	x	x	x
Impact on spouse's career	x	x	x
Pay / Compensation & Benefits	x	x	
Advancement & Promotion	x	x	x
Posting Preference	x		
Geographical Stability	x	x	x
Military Accommodation	x		

When comparing the 2008 Your-Say survey against the 2013-2017 Exit survey, there is strong correlation between what factors members considered to be of high career-related dissatisfiers and reasons for voluntarily releasing. Additionally, the Retention Survey conducted in 2016 outlined some overlapping reasons that have already been viewed in the Your-Say Survey and the Exit Survey, such as job dissatisfaction, impact of military life on spouse and children, and dissatisfaction with occupation.<sup>23</sup> That is to say, over the past several years and across a variety of surveys, members' responses to career dissatisfiers and reasons for leaving the CAF have been amazingly consistent. It is plain at this point what is contributing to members voluntarily leaving the CAF. The challenge then becomes one of identifying themes (financial, family, etc.) and identifying appropriate strategies to lessen the impact of these factors. From Table 5, these factors may be arranged into major themes of: financial and benefits; career advancement including training opportunities; personal geographical stability including family stability; and certainly, above all, giving the member the sense of owning his or her career. The following chapter will expand on the attrition reasons identified above, and give some examples of them in the CAF.

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<sup>23</sup>Nicholas Bremmer and Glen Budgell, *The 2016 CAF Retention Survey: Descriptive Analysis* (Ottawa: Human Resource Systems Group, Ltd, 2017), 3.

## CHAPTER 2 – FACTORS AFFECTING ATTRITION

It is vital to not only understand the causes of attrition in the CAF but to also comprehend how those factors interrelate and how they affect CAF members differently than they would affect a person in the private sector. The major themes already mentioned that are contributing to the rate of attrition must, therefore, be explained such that one has full appreciation of how each factor plays a role in directly affecting the members' level of commitment and ultimately their long-term retention. To begin with, one must remember that the CAF's needs can only be fulfilled by specific members who are signing up to serve their country before self, a trait which is characteristic of military members.

The first theme identified above as one that affects retention is financial benefits. Financial benefits come in two major forms: direct and indirect. Direct benefits include items such as salary, incentives and bonuses. Recruiting allowances, signing and retention bonuses would fall into this category. Indirect benefits include, for example, paid vacation time, medical benefits, clothing allowances, and other employer-paid benefits.

Above regular pay rates, pay incentives are one of the ways that organizations award members a pay increase that is congruent with the rank, training, experience and responsibility acquired. In the literature, this is referred to as internal equity (in contrast to external equity discussed below), where "jobs within the organization that are equal on skill, effort, responsibility, working conditions, and other valid comparable factors paid the same in terms of placement in pay grades."<sup>24</sup> However, while we accept that a Corporal is a Corporal, they do not all work under the same conditions and in the same places, and this causes some inequities and dissatisfaction. For example, the Retention Survey revealed that the majority of respondents had

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<sup>24</sup>Richard N. Block and Ellen E. Kossek, *Managing Human Resources in the 21st Century: From Core Concepts to Strategic Choice* (United States: South-Western College Publishing, 2000), 16.8.

reported major dissatisfaction with post-living differential (PLD) benefits.<sup>25</sup> PLD allowance is meant to lessen to an extent the financial hardship placed on military member and their families when they are posted a particular area where the cost of living is generally greater than the national average.<sup>26</sup> This is not surprising considering major cities' cost of living, such as their real-estate, is much higher than others and, therefore, much more expensive to certain members affected by these postings, while pay rates remain constant. If the PLD is very low or has not been reviewed and adjusted according to market spikes, it places members at a financial disadvantage. The annual incentives afforded to the members does not compensate for such diverse geographical living costs. By way of another example, in the Public Service, civilian employees receive a salary bonus for being bilingual.<sup>27</sup> In the CAF, members receive certain points on their ranking boards depending on the level of bilingual profile they have. CAF members are becoming more bilingual and the CAF is enrolling more bilingual members, thereby making the competition very high in that members need a very high profile to progress. This affects job satisfaction. While the requirement for bilingualism is valid, there is reason to question it when looking at certain occupations. For example, an Avionics Technician may operate in one particular language without the need to have him/her fully bilingual and without any effect on operations. Therefore, the comparison must be made to the requirements in the external labour market.

In contrast to internal pay equity, external equity suggests that similar jobs in the CAF are paid in comparison to those found in the private labour market, including the option to pay “at

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<sup>25</sup>Nicholas Bremmer and Glen Budgell, *The 2016 CAF Retention Survey: Descriptive Analysis* (Ottawa: Human Resource Systems Group Ltd, 2017), 49.

<sup>26</sup> Department of National Defence, Compensation and Benefits Instructions: Allowances for Officers and Non-Commissioned Members, Last modified 15 November 2017, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-policies-standards-benefits/ch-205-officer-ncm-allowance-rates-effective-01-sept-2017.page#sec-45>, 205.45.

<sup>27</sup> National Joint Council, “Bilingualism Bonus Directive,” Last accessed 25 February 2018, <http://www.njc-cnm.gc.ca/directive/d1/en>.

market” or above market wages.<sup>28</sup> The 2016 CAF Retention Survey: Qualitative Analysis further reported Pay as the highest factor required to be changed to increase retention<sup>29</sup> with Officers generally more dissatisfied with pay than NCMs.<sup>30</sup> Equitable pay would normally include overtime pay in the private sector. This is one type of external equity where, for example, members look for compensation for hours they work. In the CAF, overtime pay does not exist *per se*, although it is built into CAF pay scales. It is a percentage of the overall salary and compared with the pay rate of public servants, not the private sector. Approximately 6% is built in for overtime for NCMs and 4% for the officers.<sup>31</sup> This intended to compensate for overtime and extra duty time. It is not known how well this is understood amongst the broader CAF membership. Another way of compensating members for hours worked beyond their normal working shift has been through time off.<sup>32</sup> But this is not consistently applied, especially since it is a benefit (often locally governed) rather than an entitlement. Therefore, an analysis of the rate of pay and benefits must be made, taken not only through the members’ perspective but with the added view of what is similarly offered to those in the private sector.

The second factor negatively affecting retention discussed in the previous chapter was the impact on CAF members, children and spouse’s under the larger umbrella of geographical stability. To begin with, it is crucial to understand why geographical stability is a factor that members look for today and why it has become important, regardless of the marital status of the member. Following this discussion we will explore the effects it has on the member’s children

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<sup>28</sup>Block and Kossek, *Managing Human Resources in the 21st Century: From Core Concepts to Strategic Choice* (United States: South-Western College Publishing, 2000), 16.8.

<sup>29</sup>Glen Budgell, Emreh Eren and Rebecca Lee, *2016 CAF Retention Survey: Qualitative Analysis* (Ottawa: Human Resource Systems Group Ltd, 2017), 38.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>31</sup>Canada. Department of National Defence, “Pay Overview,” Last modified 5 December 2017, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-pay/pay-overview.page>.

<sup>32</sup>Canada. Department of National Defence, Leave Policy Manual, “Leave Policy,” Last modified 05 December 2017, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-benefits/leave-policy.page#chap9>, 9.1.01.

and the geographical instability factors affecting the spouse. The social era in which the CAF operates is no longer the one that existed in the seventies or eighties, and demographics and certainly family dynamics and compositions have changed.

In order to understand why these factors are of specific importance for CAF members, comparison will be made on the differences between them and many civilian employees. When looking at the member just as a working individual, his/her life needs to be compared to a civilian employee. While some employers choose to relocate employees for reasons such as more interesting or challenging positions, career advancement, improved work-life balance, better work location,<sup>33</sup> employees seek geographical stability for other reasons, just as valid. A civilian employee may have purchased a home, or begins to work in order to afford the purchase of a home. In some form, civilian employees have their roots in their town or city and associate the region as their home. They build social networks of friends and potentially guard their families close by. In my opinion, if they relocate, in most cases it is *their* personal decision and choice. For the majority, no employer asks them to fulfill a tour of a few years, or at times – months, only to be moved again. But even a civilian employee, encounters some stress when asked to change jobs. This stress could be attributed to the need to perform well from the onset, and at times without the socialization into their new workplace or the training associated.<sup>34</sup> Military members are no different in that they too experience apprehension in having to prove themselves in their new posting and to their new chain of command, especially when they have back-to-back postings. From their perspective, the geographical stability can sometimes allow them to master their job and thereby score better on their evaluations after having done the same job for over a

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<sup>33</sup>Gary Dessler, *Fundamentals of Human Resource Management*, Fourth Edition. (Boston: Pearson, 2016), 270.

<sup>34</sup>Block and Kossek, *Managing Human Resources in the 21st Century: From Core Concepts to Strategic Choice* (United States: South-Western College Publishing, 2000), 24.11-24.12.

year or two. This is one argument for members seeking to remain in place for longer periods of time.

Other reasons for members seeking more geographical stability revolve around social aspects. A military member can seek to be grounded geographically if they have entered a new relationship. Some people enjoy having the close friends and family network support to either assist with childcare, be there in time of urgent need or simply provide that social and emotional support; this is considered a very important factor in that, at times, it competes with the career itself. For civilian employees, they generally don't have to weigh their options because this is not a factor that comes into question; normally there is not as frequent a requirement to be relocated. Growing or having roots in one geographical region falls into this category. As an example, an employee may have a deep sense of belonging in the home they live in where he/she grew up. This is already sacrificed by military members due to postings. It is one thing for the member to have to detach themselves from the home or neighbourhood in which he or she was raised and it is even harder for them to demand that from their family, if they have one. This leads now into the next point about the effect that relocation has on family, beginning with the effects on spouses.

The effect which geographical stability has on spouses is a very large consideration. Two generations ago, the spouse would look after the home and the children in what was termed as the traditional family. With the last generation, a shift was made in that military spouses were searching for jobs out of various necessities: looking for extra income to assist with the family financial responsibilities, the need for socializing, or to pursue personal and professional interests or aspirations.<sup>35</sup> The change that has occurred is that spouses are no longer in search of jobs.

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<sup>35</sup> Statistics Canada. "The Surge of Women in the Workforce," Last modified 3 March 2017, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2015009-eng.htm>.

Today, more and more are seeking full-time careers and are pursuing their own educational goals. The careers they have not only contribute to the financial well-being of the family but also to their own sense of independence and self-worth. That is to say that their income is much higher than that of minimum wage and the loss of this income as a result of following a spouse on a posting can have a dramatic effect on the family. Even National Hockey League players look forward to earning seniority on their teams that comes with age, to include a No-Move or No-Trade clause in their contracts. These clauses give them many advantages that include remaining in one location to give their families geographical stability.<sup>36</sup> In the majority of cases, this is not applicable to the civilian employee because his/her spouse is not placed in the position to consider this change in career or starting from lower positions in a new location. If this were to be applied to the military family, one can see how the potential loss of career, seniority within the spouse's firm and loss of the quality of the position including the salary, may have on the family.

Other issues that spouses are concerned with are not career-related but relate to the family responsibility that the spouse bears and more so when there are children involved. Research demonstrates that the stress and anxiety of making the new residence a home for themselves and their children along with the stress of integrating in a new community (even more so if that new community is of a different official language), in the new school or finding a family doctor, the loss of close friends and having that support network are but a few examples that compound to the stress<sup>37</sup> of a geographical relocation. When looking at the effects of relocation on children, civilian employees do not face the threat unless it is on a voluntary basis where they apply for a job outside their region. But in general, most do not deal with the same issue of the effect on

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<sup>36</sup> NHL Collective Bargaining Agreement, Last modified 10 October 2017, <https://www.capfriendly.com/faq>.

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer Martinell, Samantha Urban, *Relocation Programs and the Impact of Relocating on Families*, (DGMPPRA: Ottawa, April 2012), 18.



their children, which military members face. Children develop friendships at school or in their community from an early age. They also get used to the school system they are in. They integrate into their community somewhat faster when they are young than when they are in their teenage years. As they grow up, this transition becomes harder. Authors Block and Kossek state that “to the extent that domestic relocation causes problems, it appears with late adolescent children, who miss the close friendships developed and have a hard time getting socially integrated in a new high school in their last two years.”<sup>38</sup> But the challenges are not limited to making friends. They are far greater. Some children require to be followed up by a specific specialist, or require specific medical care that is better offered in one location over another. While studies have demonstrated that relocating is associated with better adaptation to new situations and higher participation in social activities,<sup>39</sup> there are also negative implications that begin to arise in early adolescent years when the child finds it more challenging to adapt to the new school curricula and this eventually begins to affect the quality of their learning process at the school. Geographical stability minimizes these stressors on the children and certainly on their parents.

Geographical stability can easily encompass the need to avoid a posting to a deployable unit. The time away from home, for some couples, means that the parent at home must take on more of the responsibility or one of the children must now co-parent to assist with the care of family, or the separation places a strain on the relationship between the parents.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, a combination of these reasons leads to the military member’s need to alleviate this burden by

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<sup>38</sup>Block and Kossek, *Managing Human Resources in the 21st Century: From Core Concepts to Strategic Choice* (United States: South-Western College Publishing, 2000), 24.13.

<sup>39</sup>Jennifer Martinell, Samantha Urban, *Relocation Programs and the Impact of Relocating on Families*, (DGMPPRA: Ottawa, April 2012), 17.

<sup>40</sup>Amanda Bullock and Alla Skomorovsky, *Children in Military Families: The Impact of Deployment and Relocation on Child Well-Being* (Ottawa: DGMPPRA, 2014), 4.

requesting to stay in the same location longer. There is also the element of having to potentially sell their home, which, depending on the real-estate market, could invoke more stress if there was potential for loss of equity.<sup>41</sup> Spouses, whether employed or not, share the same concerns as the military member because it could adversely affect the family's financial situation.

Furthermore, the logistical planning that accompanies postings is a huge responsibility which the military family has to take on and begin from scratch all over again.<sup>42</sup> This is why some military members, at some point in their career, look for the geographical stability. One option to a mandatory relocation (i.e., a posting) is Imposed Restriction, defined as "an approved delay in moving dependents, household goods and effects ((D) HG&E) for a specific period of time upon being posted to a new place of duty within Canada."<sup>43</sup> However, this often trades one set of stressors for another (i.e., family separation).

The geographical instability could also be linked to the third factor of dissatisfaction; advancement and promotion. Career progression through training and experience is a major component of HRM that has a huge bearing on the advancement and promotion of its employees. Managing career development properly is directly related to an increase in the employee's level of commitment to the organization.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, deliberate, planned career development on the part of senior managers and executives of any organization, like the leadership in a military institution, produces a higher level of commitment from the employee (member) because the employee is now aware that a career path is being crafted such that they can reach their professional goals. This is done through the organization's offering of courses, training, investing

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<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Department of National Defence, Imposed Restriction (IR), CF Military Personnel Instruction 01/17, Last accessed 16 March 2018, [http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/assets/CMP\\_Intranet/docs/en/publications/cf-mil-pers-instr-01-17-imposed-restrictions.pdf](http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/assets/CMP_Intranet/docs/en/publications/cf-mil-pers-instr-01-17-imposed-restrictions.pdf).

<sup>44</sup>Gary Dessler and Nita Chhinzer, *Human Resource Management in Canada*, Thirteenth Canadian Edition. (Don Mills: Pearson, 2017), 205.

in their employees' professional development through education and/or career counselling.<sup>45</sup> Succession planning within DND is “an integrated, systematic approach to identify, recruit, develop and retain talent for key positions... which means developing the leadership competencies and knowledge expertise needed”<sup>46</sup> to ensure that the organization can have civilian employees or military members ready to fill high profile positions to meet and carry out its Defence commitments. For those identified for succession planning, they are seen to possess a degree of intellectual competence, potential and leadership to not only excel in their own career but also to advance the organization's vision. Unfortunately, full succession planning cannot be offered to all employees. However, if the employer is viewed through the employee's lens as having given them the opportunity to develop and having counselled them on various career options, one can be relatively certain that the employee will feel a sense of belonging, worth, and satisfaction. Authors Chhinzer and Dessler affirm, “how well an employer fulfills this career development role will help determine an employee's overall job satisfaction and commitment to his or her employer.”<sup>47</sup>

A competing factor with succession planning is work-life balance. While baby boomers were content with having a career that was focused on the organization, according to Gary Dessler, “people entering the job market now often value more opportunities for balanced work-family lives.”<sup>48</sup> By contrast, while the CAF's succession planning demands the members' time and energy to be fully invested, at times it does not necessarily come hand-in-hand with allowing its members to easily balance their career needs with their personal needs in life. Succession

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<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>46</sup> DND Succession Planning for Managers, Last modified May 2010, [http://hrciv-rhciv.mil.ca/assets/HRCIV\\_Intranet/docs/en/dnd-succession-planning-guide-for-managers.pdf](http://hrciv-rhciv.mil.ca/assets/HRCIV_Intranet/docs/en/dnd-succession-planning-guide-for-managers.pdf).

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>48</sup>Gary Dessler, *Fundamentals of Human Resource Management*, Fourth Edition. (Boston: Pearson, 2016), 252.

planning is viewed from the military leadership perspective as giving to the members opportunities to grow and potentially climb the corporate ladder ahead of their peers. While that sounds attractive to many, it must be regarded in a different light; that the member is accepting many risks such as being transferred from one position to another within short time-frames or being deployed or posted geographically. Consequently, they are confronted with the hardship it may have on their families. These risks must be appreciated by the CAF specifically because a civilian employee does not concern himself with the majority of the hardships which the military member faces.

Even when a small percentage of the organization's personnel are succession planned, there still exists, albeit to various extents, career development planning for the remainder of the employees such that they too feel that they are being given every opportunity to develop personally and professionally. Career advancement in the form of promotions mean an increase in pay, responsibility, accountability, exposure and visibility, and will ultimately lead to job satisfaction in most cases.<sup>49</sup> This type of advancement offers more positively challenging opportunities that members are seeking. Promotions tend to foster a higher level of engagement between the two parties and also increase the level of commitment of the employees.

The military system's career advancement requires its members to progress in the organization and fill positions, taking on the responsibilities associated with higher rank. In contrast to the military personnel management structure, a civilian employee, in general, applies for a promotion. If offered a higher position, the civilian employee can refuse without negative repercussions to his/her career. This is not the case for members of the CAF. Military members could refuse a promotion but without strong and valid reasons, they face a career review and

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<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 266.

refusal of a promotion is not automatically granted.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, in the CAF, one is promoted based on a combination of competency, performance, potential and of course, after a minimum time in rank. In the private sector, where unions exist, the consideration for promotion could be based on seniority of how long an employee has been part of the organization or been filling the same position. Lack of career advancement and promotion is a dissatisfier in the CAF because the competition is high; senior positions are limited in number as one advances within the organization; and members, can be left to do horizontal transfers from one position to another if there is no room to advance via promotions. Additionally, the more frequently postings and movement of members occurs, the stronger the perception of some of those members in having to prove themselves on a new base or to a new chain of command with an already established ranking of its pre-existing members. This is somewhat normal but equally understandable from the member's point of view in that it is challenging to compete with another member in a similar position who has been executing that job for over a year. This is a one of reasons behind the perception of lower levels of fairness of the merit processes and the personnel appraisal process as reported on the 2016 CAF Retention Survey.<sup>51</sup>

The ownership of one's career cannot be strictly the responsibility of the employer to take on. Civilian corporations encourage employees to be part of the process: "employees should be encouraged to be proactive and accept responsibility for their own careers, including seeking out opportunities for leadership training."<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, those who are motivated enough to take the initial steps in this direction are regarded as demonstrating a certain level of leadership and

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<sup>50</sup>Hussey, P.R. Brigadier-General, *Promotion Refusal – Direction*, Director General Military Careers, 16 February 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Nicholas Bremmer and Glen Budgell, *The 2016 CAF Retention Survey: Descriptive Analysis* (Ottawa: Human Resource Systems Group, Ltd, 2017), 40.

<sup>52</sup> Gary Dessler and Nita Chhiner, *Human Resource Management in Canada*, Thirteenth Canadian Edition. (Don Mills: Pearson, 2017), 212.

potential. Empowering the employees to feel they are part of their own career development process and part of their own succession planning path increases the rate of success for the organization.<sup>53</sup> Members of the CAF reported ownership of career as a dissatisfier – in that they don't feel the sense of co-owning their career management and postings.<sup>54</sup> The need for having a sense of ownership seems to be a basic desire of any employee. It gives the employee a sense of power and control over their career development, career advancement and ultimately over their career path. The expectations shared between today's employee and employer is different than the relationship of the baby-boomers and their employers. Referred to as the psychological contract between the employer and employee, this informal commitment to one another is unwritten yet understood by both sides.<sup>55</sup> For example, the employee expects from the employing organization to work in an equitable environment that is both motivating and rewarding; the employer expects the employee to learn the job, execute it competently and be loyal to the employing organization. This psychological contract could be implemented to demonstrate to the employees that they are valuable to the organization and that their needs will be heard. Further to being heard, when the employer along with the HR department demonstrate an active role in fulfilling their employees' needs, it has a direct effect on increasing the employees' sense of commitment and dedication to their employer.

Career development is a leadership responsibility and must be taken into consideration when conducting a qualitative versus quantitative analysis of developing the right person for the future jobs against the number of positions that require to be filled.<sup>56</sup> Ensuring that proper career

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<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Peach, Jennifer, *Spring 2016 Your-Say Survey Scientific Letter: Organizational Effectiveness in the CAF* (Ottawa: DRDC, 2016), 22.

<sup>55</sup>Gary Dessler, *Fundamentals of Human Resource Management*, Fourth Edition. (Boston: Pearson, 2016), 252.

<sup>56</sup>Gary Dessler and Nita Chhinzer, *Human Resource Management in Canada*, Thirteenth Canadian Edition. (Don Mills: Pearson, 2017), 118-120.

development and a threshold level of investment is made in employees, will also ensure that one employee is not overburdened with too many responsibilities and will prepare the organization in readily filling new or existing positions without any down time. Additionally, career development must be taken on to assure the employee that they are valued to the organization and that their career advancement is important, and in return, that retaining these employees is their primary interest. This is why it behooves the CAF to react to what members consider factors of dissatisfaction that are having a direct effect on increasing attrition and decreasing their retention. Accompanying the many dissatisfiers discussed above, and compounding efforts to address them, there seems to be a moderate level of cynicism that the senior leadership will actually do anything about them.<sup>57</sup>

The five major factors discussed that are a direct effect on retention are push factors; those factors negatively affecting the member directly and push him/her to release. The next chapter will focus on retention strategies which the CAF has employed in the past and how the CAF differs in their current retention strategies in comparison to other military and private sector organizations. Additional strategies not yet identified elsewhere may also emerge. It is only following a thorough examination of these retention strategies that one will derive a deeper understanding of what strategies work, which do not, and which could be considered to improve retention of CAF personnel.

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<sup>57</sup>Nicholas Bremmer and Glen Budgell, *The 2016 CAF Retention Survey: Descriptive Analysis* (Ottawa: Human Resource Systems Group Ltd, 2017), 66.

### CHAPTER 3 – UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS AFFECTING RETENTION

In the previous chapter, the top five dissatisfying factors that affected the retention of military members in the CAF were discussed, being: financial and benefits; career advancement including training opportunities; personal geographical stability including family stability; and sense of career ownership. Each factor was explained by outlining its significance in a member's career and by demonstrating how each factor affected the member's life differently than how it affects a civilian employee as a comparison. With the appreciation of knowing what the military member sacrifices for their career, this chapter will highlight what retention strategies have been employed in the past, which strategies have worked and which have not and the reasons why. Furthermore, it will explore the retention strategies employed by other military and some civil organizations.

Retention Model. One purpose of a model is to identify the components of a phenomenon or process to better understand it. It also helps to guide research and interventions. There are many models of the various HR processes including retention. Below I briefly discuss a very simple model to be able to situate the discussion of retention strategies. Shanghvi uses a cross sector model to explain employee retention strategies using four components: job, culture, personal, and external forces.<sup>58</sup> He suggests these four components cover the specific satisfiers, and dissatisfiers that either pull a worker towards staying in an organization or push them out. Under the job factor are things included like, challenging and meaningful work, pay, autonomy, training and development availability, responsibility and additional benefits. Under the culture component are things like person-organization fit, do workers understand the culture and buy into it. The culture component also includes the need to have management perceived as

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<sup>58</sup>Ian Shanghvi, *Retaining Immigrants in Rural Communities: Employee Retention Strategies* (Brandon University, April 2012), [https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2015/09/Employee\\_Retention\\_Strategies.pdf](https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2015/09/Employee_Retention_Strategies.pdf).



competent, that there is recognition and rewards for good work, organizational values in line with personal values of the employees and that there is a supportive, leadership and management style.<sup>59</sup> The personal factor includes work-life balance, family considerations, geographical stability, and age and stage issues. Finally, under the external forces are things like external job market with respect to how readily other jobs are available, competition by other industries, previous employment experiences, and community view of the job.<sup>60</sup> Within the external component, if the economy is flourishing, members will study the economic climate and assess if their skills and experience can be utilized in the private sector. If competition from other industries is great, this will be a pull factor: it attracts members from the CAF to those jobs in the stronger economy. While this is only one simple model of retention, it is complete enough to help anchor the discussion of retention strategies in the CAF.

In 1998, the CAF introduced the Pilot Terminable Allowance<sup>61</sup> as a way to retain pilots who were close to completing their TOS. The allowance was meant to retain those individuals who were close to terminating service or who were eligible to terminate their service and take an early retirement. It was a short-term measure to increasing retention and was later closed in 2003. By year 2001, the CAF Recruiting Project was launched and a section within the Director Military Human Resource Requirements was tasked to review occupations in major distress and develop attraction and retention strategies. These strategies included several financial approaches, terms of service changes, and openings/streamlining career options (e.g., component transfer). Amongst these strategies was a signing bonus for medical, dental and engineering

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<sup>59</sup> Mathe, Moqephe, “Staff Retention at World Vision International Lethoso,” (University of Free State, November 2015), <http://scholar.ufs.ac.za:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11660/5320/MatheMI.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, 68.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> D. Howe, Maj, Canadian Forces, *The Bonus Fix: The Role of Retention Bonuses in the Canadian Forces and Policy Recommendations* (Ottawa: National Defence, 2005), 61.

officers, paid over a number of years, to attract them and enroll them (ultimately, at a higher rank than the basic Private or Officer Cadet)<sup>62</sup> as already trained members in the service while having them commit for a specific amount of time in service. Further, the CRA increased from 55 to the potential of serving to age 60. Under Shanghvi's model, the CAF attempted to utilize strategies that fit under the job component by offering financial incentives.

While financial based strategies were successful in the short term, other factors for members' commitment to remain part of the organization were not studied in depth to address critical factors at the core of the attrition problem. That is to say that the day a pilot finished his extended TOS, most often the pilot did in actual fact release. So did the medical officers. Interestingly, when attrition surveys were conducted on pilots both who were and were not under the PTA program regarding different career plans, responses were quite similar.<sup>63</sup> A comparative review of the jobs in the private industry revealed that while pilots did commence at a lower salary with the private industry, their salary did jump drastically after a couple of years, all the while giving their family the geographical rooting in one location.<sup>64</sup> While a quick-fix solution was found, it did not promote retention past the five year extended TOS. This begs the question of whether this retention scheme is the best short-term strategy to improving the retention rates not just for pilots but for other distressed occupations as well.

The latest approach to retain the pilots was to force them to stay in using new Terms of Service. Canadian Forces General Order 086 from 2017 placed restrictions on the pilots releasing following training or requalification. The branch though that if it has to reinvest in members

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<sup>62</sup> Rob Morrow, Major, NATO, Recruiting and Retention of Military Personnel [https://www.nato.int/issues/women\\_nato/Recruiting%20&%20Retention%20of%20Mil%20Personnel.pdf](https://www.nato.int/issues/women_nato/Recruiting%20&%20Retention%20of%20Mil%20Personnel.pdf), October 2007, 43-44.

<sup>63</sup> Nancy Otis, Straver, Michelle, Review of Attrition and Retention Research for the Canadian Forces, <http://cradpdf.drdc.gc.ca/PDFS/unc78/p530400.pdf>, (DND: DRDC, October 2008), 26.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

throughout their careers such as requalifying them on a particular aircraft, then the pay back to the organization would be a minimum amount of time to serve following this reinvestment in the member.<sup>65</sup> It basically outlines that following a posting at a squadron undergoing training, or requalifying, or following a flying position with a foreign service, then another three years of service would be obligatory, following the training or return to Canada from the international posting. Therefore, those who are posted to a ground or to a staff position for a full tour of 24 months must do a condensed requalification. This could be regarded as a penalty to those undergoing the requalification training by having an imposed restriction on their release compared to the pilot that remained in an operational unit, who does not need to requalify and therefore has no obligation to remain in the service. Forcing members to stay in is not the answer. Rather, to retain them, perhaps an exit interview should be conducted to listen to the members and find out what factors were affecting their retention.

Although reference is made to the Pilot occupation, there are many distressed trades<sup>66</sup> in the CAF. Although specific release reasons were confidential, both the Your-Say survey and the Retention survey spoke to the major reasons affecting the retention culture in the CAF. Those reasons affect various branches as well, such as: social workers, medical officers, dental officers, construction engineers (CE) and senior non-commissioned CE members (referred to as CE Superintendents), supply technicians, intelligence operators and many more.<sup>67</sup> Research has shown that while these occupations have been repeatedly understrength over the last few years, for some, such as the Pilot occupation, support and medical branch, their attrition rates have

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<sup>65</sup>Canada. Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces General Order 086, Restricted Release for Pilots*, Chief Military Personnel, May 2017.

<sup>66</sup>Distressed trades or occupations are those that the CAF has traditionally had difficulty recruiting into due to various reasons but mostly affected by shortfalls in the labour market (such as those in technical trades like Avionic Technicians), or economic factors (such as medical/dental trades because of the better compensation they receive private sector).

<sup>67</sup>Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis, Occupational Analysis, (DGMPPRA: 10 May 2016).

increased drastically during this timeframe.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the attraction and particularly the retention situation will only become worse if successful retention strategies are not developed in time.

A review of what another Armed Forces organization has done to improve retention may be helpful. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) developed various bonuses such as the Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme (MSBS),<sup>69</sup> where the member becomes eligible for a retention bonus upon serving fifteen years of consecutive service and having reached the rank of Major or Warrant Officer. This benefit is “an amount equal to a member's annual salary on the benefit computation day.” Another bonus is offered if the member is in a critical role and has served between one to three years. There is also a service allowance to make up for some of the penuries that some of the ADF members are required to work under such as: “on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, working long and irregular hours including weekends, public holidays and shifts, frequent postings, often at short notice, hard living and working conditions, or frequent absence from home.”<sup>70</sup> These allowances attempt to compensate the members for the effects which the operational working tempo or environment has on them and on the family. In this case, the ADF is using financial based rewards, above the salaries, to retain its members for the hardships they may be experiencing.

The United States (US) Marine Corps faces similar challenges in the retention of its members as the CAF does with its pilots. The US Marines’ shortages are due to, “decreasing pilot flight time, increasingly high operational tempo, fewer career paths to MOS progression,

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<sup>68</sup>Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis, Occupational Analysis, (DGMPRA: 2012-2015).

<sup>69</sup>ADF Service, “ADF Member’s Guide: Division 1: Military Superannuation and Benefits Scheme Retention Benefit,” Last accessed 23 March 2018, <http://www.defence.gov.au/PayAndConditions/ADF/Chapter-3/Part-5/Div-1.asp>.

<sup>70</sup>ADF Service, “ADF Member’s Guide: Service Allowance,” Last accessed 23 March 2018, <http://www.defence.gov.au/PayAndConditions/ADF/Members-Guide/Salaries-and-bonuses/ServiceAllowance.asp>.

and fewer promotion opportunities have all contributed to a rapid exodus of Marine aviation talent.”<sup>71</sup> Despite these internal factors, they also face external influences that have contributed to their voluntary release where they have sought competitive and exciting jobs with the private industry, rather than being faced with the exhaustion of a demanding operational tempo and short recovery time between deployments.<sup>72</sup> With a booming private airline industry, the members are finding the private sector to be much more rewarding. The airline industry was matching their military salary within a matter of two years of working for them with a significant pay increase as they gain seniority.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, a higher salary, a slower work tempo, more flying time and certainly more geographical stability has enticed the Marine pilots to seek jobs in the private sector, resulting in their ever-increasing attrition rate. In 2017, the United States Air Force (USAF) was looking at the potential of providing a yearly bonus of \$35K to its Pilots for reasons of improving retention coupled with the potential for a prolonged posting to provide geographical stability and to allow them to state their preferred posting locations.<sup>74</sup>

Looking at private enterprises, the Bank of Montreal (BMO) has developed quite a few strategies to look after the well-being of their employees through more than indirect benefits to promote work-life effectiveness and have developed a Talent Strategy to identify and develop key future leaders within its organization. To begin with, their work-life strategies encompass personal well-being which includes Supportive Practices and Resources, Flexible Work Arrangements and Benefits for Different Stages of Life.<sup>75</sup> These various schemes will be discussed in more detail to understand the granularity of its importance to the individual

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<sup>71</sup>A.J. Ramthun, Major, Scherrer, Eric A., Major, Proposed Solutions to Marine Corps Aviation’s Fixed-Wing Pilot Shortage, Marine Corps Gazette, Published May 2017, 28.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>74</sup>Oriana Pawlik, “New Bonus: \$455K Over 13 Years for Air Force Fighter Pilots,” Last accessed 25 March 2018, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2017/06/05/new-bonus-455k-13-years-air-force-fighter-pilots.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Bank of Montréal, “Employees: Work and Life Effectiveness,” Last accessed 25 March 2018, <https://www.bmo.com/home/about/banking/corporate-responsibility/employees/work-life-effectiveness>.

employee and how it could potentially improve the employee's commitment to the organization. Interestingly, the CAF has not regarded the stages of life as a contributing factor affecting the career paths members seek or as the reason affecting their retention.

BMO has been a strong advocate for a fluid work environment where trust is placed in the workers to produce outside of a rigid, micro-manageable work schedule. Supportive resources and practices include what is referred to as "People Care Days"<sup>76</sup>: time off to deal with personal matters when they cannot be made outside of working hours. As part of that arrangement, a worker can manage his way around such a situation by requesting a day off if and when there is need to be absent to take a leave of absence for compassionate care, such as taking care or supporting an ill family member, without feeling the threat of facing reprisal. This is not unique to BMO and in reality could be compared to the Public Service personal days, which serve the same purposes. In fact, the CAF has some practices that reflect the same goals (e.g., short days), however, they are not entrenched as policy. This is one indirect benefit that gives an employee that sense of reassurance that there is respect given by the company to the employee and adds more perspective to the initiative a worker will make to produce at work, after having been given thoughtful consideration. Loyalty can be given to employees simply by valuing them, regardless of how replaceable they are, and that in itself can be repaid with the same sense of loyalty from the employee who is respected, valued and trusted to his/her employer.

Another way BMO has truly been able to retain their workers is by continuously investing in an employee's ongoing higher education, whether that was on an academic basis or industrial basis. Employees can opt to return to school to further educate themselves, and BMO sees the potential benefit in that higher education and has implemented the Continuing Education

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<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*

Assistance Plan (CEAP).<sup>77</sup> This is a managed personal development benefit that invests in employees to propel them to thriving in their education and returning to the company to apply what they learnt.<sup>78</sup> Employees can opt to return to school to further educate themselves, and BMO sees the potential benefit in that higher education and has implemented the Continuing Education Assistance Plan (CEAP).<sup>79</sup> This is a managed personal development benefit that invests in employees to propel them to thriving in their education and returning to the company to apply what they learnt. The result is not only a retained employee that is satisfied with their newfound knowledge, but BMO now has an educationally enhanced employee with potential for seniority and can aid younger ones to follow the same path with BMO as they have. Invest in employees, and they may retain themselves effortlessly if they feel that they've placed themselves on their own succession planning path within the organization.

Aside from those not formally succession planned, there are employees looking for advancement in their career and ultimately promotion. This can be done simply through offering training sessions or seminars to employees where they can hone their technical skills or improve their managerial talents. Certain training is viewed by the employee as being both valuable to their current position or long-term career ambitions in order to advance; it can also be beneficial to improve their résumé. This type of career development is a win-win for both the employee and the employer. While the employee benefits, if the organization suddenly has an internal opening or need to fill a higher position, this opens doors for promoting from within the organization.

These types of education and training opportunities are not unique to BMO and in fact are

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<sup>77</sup>Bank of Montréal, "Employees: Work and Life Effectiveness," Last accessed 25 March 2018, <https://www.bmo.com/home/about/banking/corporate-responsibility/employees/work-life-effectiveness>.

<sup>78</sup>Again, this practice is not unique to BMO and simply serves to illustrate that best-practices in large organizations often includes supporting further education. In the CAF for example we have the UTPNCM program plus several specialized education programs (legal, medical, etc.)

<sup>79</sup>Bank of Montréal, "Employees: Work and Life Effectiveness," Last accessed 25 March 2018, <https://www.bmo.com/home/about/banking/corporate-responsibility/employees/work-life-effectiveness>.

similar in scope and rationale to the ones in the CAF. Under the umbrella of continuing education, if a CAF member can be given the time and opportunity to pursue education at any time in their career – even close to the end of their TOS, and especially when it relates to their occupation, it may give the member the sense of growing within the CAF organization and the sense of being able to offer more on the job. Given the opportunity to demonstrate new potential following the attainment of more or higher education, the member may receive higher appraisal leading to a promotion. With all these interconnected factors, the potential for promotion becomes a huge retaining factor.

In aiming to offer benefit packages that fit with an employee's stage in life, BMO offers the employee the option of selecting a combination of benefits. This is one strategy that can be exploited. A standard benefits plan cannot be a “one size fits all”<sup>80</sup> because individuals may want or need different things at different times in their lives and because the makeup of the traditional family has evolved, in that the workforce has become more diverse with single employees, single parents, or full-time working couples. Having a benefits package that can be best tailored for each family may be more attractive in that it can be adjusted and tailored for each individual member or family.<sup>81</sup> For example, if military members can select five out of a list of ten additional benefits, with the option of changing their choices and receive them for free throughout their career, this may be a great marketing and retention strategy for new and existing members. As an example, BMO offers as an option a “comprehensive retiree benefits program for all eligible pensioned employees, to meet their health and wellness needs after retirement.”<sup>82</sup> Retired members of the CAF receive a provincial health card and have the option to rely on the

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<sup>80</sup> Block and Kossek, *Managing Human Resources in the 21st Century: From Core Concepts to Strategic Choice* (United States: South-Western College Publishing, 2000), 18.18.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Bank of Montréal, “Employees: Work and Life Effectiveness,” Last accessed 25 March 2018, <https://www.bmo.com/home/about/banking/corporate-responsibility/employees/work-life-effectiveness>.



public medical system or purchase their own medical insurance for their needs at that stage in their life. Perhaps offering that enhanced medical coverage to retiring members after twenty-five or thirty years of service is one way the CAF can demonstrate appreciation for the member's service and may be a way of prolonging retention.

With the resulting increase in attrition rate, the reasons behind the members' releases need to be investigated. Whether it is financial (low income), professional (dead-end job with no promotion or opportunity to grow) or even personal (no time to spend with family, no time to achieve personal life goals), any organization needs to ensure that the specific concerns of employees which eventually lead to their departure needs to be tackled head on; as the reason an existing employee leaves may be the same reason a prospective employee may opt not to join that same organization.

Having seen what strategies the CAF has tabled in the past, the temporary solutions employed merely retained members for a few years. The CAF must go the extra mile and look at what components of retention models (like Shanghvi's) it is or is not addressing well or not addressing at all. For example, most of what the CAF has been attempting to do is address its retention challenges through strategies of the job or personal component of Shanghvi's (2012) model but perhaps not enough is being done in other areas. What about the culture and external components? Within culture, if a member doesn't understand the organization or feel attached to it, then there is no sense of commitment to it either. This lack of understanding and attachment to the CAF leads to that level of cynicism already mentioned in the previous chapter, where among the members, there is a lack of faith in the leadership to take action in improving retention factors.

It is no wonder the CAF continues to face critical shortages in many of its occupations and is having a harder time to recruit and attract people to its organization. The CAF retention strategies employed between 1998 and 2003 need not only be reviewed but must be enhanced and reactivated. Innovative strategies need to be developed quickly to better reflect the new generation's needs. There are many strategies that can be put in place but some come with a dollar value and some can only be executed if the senior leadership can accept entering into informal and psychological contracts with its members, with an open mind. In the next chapter, potential strategies will be introduced that could affect better retention of CAF personnel, both short-term and long-term.

Other bigger compensation mechanisms could also be integrated and may require time, effort and commitment initially from the CAF leadership to table new compensation mechanisms that could increase the retention of members. While these greater, CAF wide benefits or bonuses do affect members' commitment, it is important as well to act quickly in order to see faster effects on retention. Such mechanisms will be discussed further in chapter four.

## CHAPTER 4 – RECOMMENDED RETENTION STRATEGIES

The major factors influencing retention in the CAF were outlined in chapter two. In the last chapter, an examination was made of the various strategies which the CAF has executed in the past or is employing currently and the reasons why the strategies did not decrease overall attrition. We also looked at some of the strategies being employed by other military and civil institutions. Knowing what the major dissatisfying factors in the CAF are will allow a comprehensive approach in making recommendations to new strategies that can be actioned in the short-term and can be applied long-term too. There are as well long-term strategies that may need time to be actioned that may address long-term retention.

**JOB.** The job component of Shanghvi's model takes into consideration financial benefits in terms of whether it meets expectations in light of salary and conditions, the potential to upgrade training and skills and career development. The financial benefits factor was a major dissatisfier and reported more by NCMs than officers. Pay rates are a structural issue that can only be modified following a long and in-depth analysis of the positions within the military occupation and the relative labour market. However, some compensation mechanisms certainly can be affected faster in the short-term. Compensation can be offered formally or informally and could be financial but does not specifically have to be. Formal type of compensation would be an agreement between the employee and employer that for weekends worked or hours worked past the normal working schedule would be compensated with short days. Direct salaries are reviewed on a regular basis, however, creative solutions such as, for example, semi-annual incentives at a lower level than annual incentives will put "raises" at a more frequent pace.

**CULTURE.** Based on responses from the Your-Say surveys and the Retention surveys, there is a perception that the CAF's values are not in line with the values and personal needs of

the member, which is undoubtedly a feature of military service, however, it may be possible to find a better balance at times. If members' values and needs, with respect to the hardships of relocation and family stability are not addressed and there is pressure placed on the member to relocate to fill a position, this is representative of the lack of support and leadership of the chain of command. This inevitably affects the retention culture. While the CAF does have an Honours and Awards program, there may be a room to improve in giving public recognition, through formal or informal means, for doing a great job. While there have been awards employed such as a Chief of Defence Staff commendation or a unit coin, there is still room to give individual and group appraisal to members who achieve more quantity and quality of work. The demonstrated ability to work at a higher level must be formally and publicly recognized, not just on the member's yearly written evaluation. As already mentioned, there is cynicism among members that any of the major issues in terms of addressing the dissatisfying factors to their level of satisfaction or at least to a level of promoting retention. The culture component has a direct effect on the personal component.

PERSONAL. Short days are granted under Short Leave and are afforded to military members to compensate them for various reasons, such as: "long hours worked during extended periods of operations/training or working on normal days of rest; provide members with time away from their duties to conduct urgent personal business; or reward exemplary work."<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the CAF already has in place a mechanism that partially addresses the personal component that author Shanghvi discussed within his retention model. But while short days could be granted, at times the chain of command cannot afford to give it or the member cannot

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<sup>83</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence, Leave Policy Manual, "Leave Policy," Last modified 05 December 2017, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-benefits/leave-policy.page#chap9>, 9.1.05.

take it if the operational tempo is too high. There is also more to be done on providing geographical stability and work-life balance.

Formal but indirect compensation can include, for example, ensuring members take advantage of opportunities to attend their occupation specific training and general training which will both help them progress in their career and provide a break from routine. Training also signals that the organization is interested in investing in the members' development. There may very well be financial commitments to pay for a member to attend training. These overhead costs are often forgotten by many members who are on the receiving end. In an institution where funding is set to a particular unit / base to another, managers must argue for an increase in their training budget, with detailed substantiation, in order to receive it. This is not always easy in the CAF because even formal (career) training is sometimes argued when the leadership is of the mind that the operational tempo of the unit cannot afford to allow the member to go on training. Managers must be ready to offer more than formal career training or courses and must think outside the box in what they can offer members to compensate them for their dedication on the job. While the CAF attempts to satisfy the job component of Shanghvi's model, one must ask if the CAF is doing enough.

Informal type of compensation could be rewards and incentives as well. These rewards, when they have a dollar amount attached to them, can make an employee feel indebted to the organization they serve. Financial-based compensation is a huge motivator because it eases debt burden, or opens doors for families to secure a better future for them and their families. Such benefits are also offered for other reasons as well and include: favourable tax legislation (firm's contributions can be tax deductible and tax-free for the employee); regulatory compliance (required by the government to contribute towards programs such as employment insurance or

pension); increase of government mandated benefits, collective bargaining (for unionized firms to ensure their firms are acting in good faith and ensure decent retirement and welfare benefits for their employees) and finally a benefit categorized under the 'right thing to do' which is the firm's ethical values motivating it to provide certain benefits.<sup>84</sup>

EXTERNAL. As previously discussed, members will always compare their job to those in the labour market. A booming economy opens doors to civilians and encourages members to release and take jobs in the private sector, especially if salaries are higher within industry. Thus, the economic state has a direct effect on the state of the military and more so in some geographical areas. The issue of pilots releasing and working for private airlines is a perfect example. They know there is competition for pilots and they are aware that they may do the same job in the private sector, earn the same salary if not an increase in salary, while perhaps being spared the stress of relocating every few years. Furthermore, if there is comparison and relevance between their job and other jobs in the industry, this could be a motivating factor to gain the training and experience in the CAF to eventually leverage this asset when they retire.

These are just some of the compensatory benefits offered to employees. Without these initiatives, members would potentially require a much higher pay scale to compensate them for the benefits that are already awarded to them indirectly, or they may find themselves working much more to be able to afford certain benefits such as medical or a retirement plan. Therefore compensation and benefits work towards attracting the employees and retaining them, their leadership, their knowledge and skill sets. But if many civilian firms are offering these benefits, then how does the CAF market itself to be the employer of choice when it comes to what it can offer? And, as we have seen previously, pay is often the most cited dissatisfier.

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<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*

Furthermore, with the dissatisfying factors highlighted, the majority of early releases could be categorized under one or multiple factors already discussed in chapter one and two. Rather than throwing money at the challenges with retention in certain occupations, there is a need to take a holistic approach in defining how the CAF must compare itself to what the existing labour market is providing.

To begin, the first dissatisfier for CAF members was financial and benefits. While the CAF has paid out signing bonuses to attract members, it has only retained these members temporarily. Eventually, once their compulsory service is complete, they will leave. But the CAF has not employed retention bonus for its military members at key milestones in their career. For example, the average member is considered fully trained eight years into their career (for some occupations, it is as little as four years, while other occupations could take up to eight years). The CAF could offer a retention bonus commensurate with completion of training or time in. Currently, at the twelve year mark, a member is awarded the Canadian Forces Decoration for his/her service and the second (clasp) for every ten years after that. Would CAF members be satisfied with a couple of retention bonuses throughout their career, such as at the twelve year mark and ten years after that or would a few months sabbatical be offered as a choice in lieu of the financial retention payout? This of course would be greatly helpful, taking into consideration that some members lose equity on the sale of their homes due to postings or that PLD is not reviewed and adjusted according to the respective market on a regular basis.

Realistically, these bonuses would have to come with conditions to serve a compulsory minimum time. If these bonuses could be transferred to a member's choice of either their mortgage balance or to a Registered Education Saving Plan or even paid out directly, this may serve to be an extended way for the organization to thank its members for their service and

motivate them to stay in longer. If this bonus is administered at the 12 year mark with the condition of serving another 5 years, that takes the member to 17 years of service. At this point, if a member was to remain in the service in anticipation of the second retention bonus (which could be an amount greater than the first bonus) at the 22 year mark, who is to say that the member will not complete another five years of service to reach this mile-stone in their career. If this program was administered closely and carefully, the CAF could potentially retain members at least until the completion of 27 years of service and could have a better grip on projected releases.

Although briefly mentioned in chapter 3, CAF salaries have a built-in overtime component. Total compensation analysis is conducted against the Public Service salaries. But members within the CAF do not compare their jobs and salaries only to the public servants. Rather, they compare pay to what they could potentially earn in the industry. For example, an Avionics Systems technician compares his / her salary and benefits against what the same technician earns working for Bombardier or Air Canada. One strategy to overcome the overtime factor which many members put in at work would be to offer it to them to cash it out or to formally take it as paid leave. After all, each individual member puts in different hours at work and not every member, even within the same unit or same function, works the same number of hours in overtime.

The tax-rate cut could be developed to be employed in the future as a permanent benefit for CAF members. From the moment a member is enrolled, one financial benefit could be to have the member pay the lowest provincial tax currently in existence in Canada or eliminate the obligation to pay it completely. Those posted to Alberta, do not pay a provincial tax while those in Ontario are paying eight percent and Quebec paying nearly ten percent. This benefit would



not only be a financial benefit and a demonstration of the country's appreciation to members' service but would also provide equity across all members of the CAF. Furthermore, it may reduce the discouragement of being posted into one geographical location over another.

Whether it is a few months sabbatical or a retention bonus or a tax rate cut, these strategies could be actioned as a temporary measure over the next ten to fifteen years as a way to stabilize attrition while pay rates and better financial benefits are being developed. This strategy would need to be monitored in the effect it will have on retention and if proven to be successful, it can be looked at as a long-term permanent retention strategy or benefit.

The second dissatisfying factor was career advancement including opportunities for formal and informal training. To promote commitment, the CAF must demonstrate a greater genuine interest in the member's personal career goals as well as career inspirations. This could be achieved with offering the member a civilian-endorsed diploma or certificate in a vocational subject of their choice with the time away to complete it. This could be offered as a full-time or part-time study period, depending on the needs of the member's respective branch. Some members are interested in pursuing technical skills that are not military career related but could be if they are preparing to release and enter a different field.

The level of education merits a number of points on a member's evaluation. Professional development increases this score. But some members do not have the flexibility to pursue additional education due to the operational tempo of the unit they work at. Furthermore, full time post-graduate education is offered in the CAF but to a select few and is a very competitive application process. If a member has access to an education counsellor from the onset of his/her career in the CAF, the personal interface with a professional educator may allow them to develop a career plan which includes professional development training at specific intervals in their

career. These education counsellors would need to work closely with the members' career managers to solidify a plan for the member, giving him/her both the opportunity to attain the higher education they are seeking and at the right time to do it. This would certainly give members a sense of co-owning their career and a way to somewhat control their own career path. As mentioned earlier, it cannot be simply the responsibility of the career manager or the chain of command. Taking both the professional advice on what the members need to do to further their career and their own interest on what it is they wish to enhance their knowledge and technical abilities and expertise, each member will be given more choices on how to draw his/her own path. Thus, the onus will be placed more on the member to lead the way.

Drawn from the research presented in chapter two and three, career advancement includes promotions. I am of the opinion that promotion thresholds could be lowered in the CAF in certain occupations where there is room to increase promotions and a need to retain the talent. If the number of promotions is increased slightly, there is more hope for a member to advance. That increased potential for career advancement will not only provide for a bigger pool to draw from when an unexpected need surfaces to fill a higher position but it will also allow the organization to grow their most valuable assets – their members. There are those that don't want to advance in rank. Not every pilot wants to become the Chief of Defence Staff and not every junior NCM wants to become a Chief Warrant Officer. There are members who wish to climb in the ranks and only to a certain rank level, and they don't necessarily need to be grown in the exact same way. In short, not every member needs to be succession planned. Those who are don't always need to be succession planned in the very same way.

In terms of geographical stability, if the fear of moving from one location to another is due to the stress of finding a home and the financial burden to purchase a new residence or sell

the existing residence, then the availability of military housing needs to be studied. With the instability of the housing market, one way to lessen this fear is to increase military housing and at rates independent of the housing market. And why not provide slightly lower rental rates than the economy when the CAF is asking its members for an increased level of commitment to the organization? This strategy would afford military members to relocate with the added benefit of being able to rent and at a slightly lower rate than the economy. It simultaneously presents the members with more housing options than the need to purchase and have to face selling the residence.

Geographical stability is also an issue for the members' family, both the working spouse and children. One strategy that can be employed to provide family support is to provide a one-time yearly benefit to have a family member brought (travel) to the military family at public expense for reasons of providing extended childcare if the civilian spouse for health or employment purposes cannot look after children alone while the military spouse is deployed or away from home. This is one way of extending the family support by bringing it to the member's location. The frequent postings needs to be better reviewed to analyze whether a member really requires to be posted out of his/her geographical location. To better explain, if the move is only providing a lateral switch in positions and responsibilities, then the hardship of undergoing a full move should be avoided. One other way to decrease postings would be to allow members to apply for positions. If some positions can be applied for, where the Commanding Officer (CO) of the gaining unit, as well as the career manager, decide that member X is the best fit for the position, then you stand to find a person who will want to be posted to fill the position in question. This is an approach employed by the United States Air Force. With this strategy, the members are given the opportunity to play a role in their own

career development, employment and ultimately affecting their own succession planning path. They are able to market themselves potentially better for other jobs they may be interested in. It also gives the members the sense of co-owning their career, when they have been part of the decision to where the next posting may be.

Unfavourable posting locations would need to be assessed to determine what factors are making it undesirable: whether it's the location or the primary language of the new posting location. If it's a language barrier issue, then language training needs to be offered at zero cost to both the spouse and the children, in order to bring them to a proficient level such that they can function in the new location. This means that the Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC) need to increase the number of second language courses and trainees to teach, or tutorials, to ease the stress on both the parents and the children. If it is also the challenge of finding a family physician, then this stressor needs to be eliminated. The CAF needs to partner with the civilian doctors, as well as specialists, in each geographical location who are ready to take new patients coming into the area. This could be a responsibility of an MFRC and would ultimately mean that the funding for MFRCs would need to be increased to give the military family that indirect benefit. The need for special medical treatments for the few families requires to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, increasing the chances for a member to be posted to a specific geographical area or to remain in their current location, if it will ease the burden of having to find that specialized care delivery to a dependent.

When the spouse must leave his/her career behind, the anxiety that accompanies finding a new job at the new location is immense. To restart the job search, a few months before the actual move date, is not sufficient time to secure a position. The spouse will not only be looking for a vacant position but will also face losing the seniority or pay grade that he or she had. This is

accrued when there is no mutual recognition of credentials across the provinces, where the spouse is faced with recertifying in his/her specialized domain.

To deal with family challenges like this, creative solutions around postings and succession planning must be found. Although the CAF has no control over the civilian spouse's career, the military member is faced with making decision on whether he/she wants to move or to give his/her spouse career priority. There are several possible outcomes. The spouses could take the move and lose their jobs, the members may elect out of career progression, even temporarily, by voting for family at the expense of a career, to the extreme they may leave the CAF, they could choose to remain employed in their geographical area over having a growing career (if that is possible), or the member could accept a posting unaccompanied. Rather than rationalizing postings, this could be where members engage with career managers and say they are happy to remain in current rank and location because of reasons such as children's schooling and/or spouse's career and accept finishing their current TOS where they are. It is possible that the member would be content with remaining in the same location with the full understanding that they will be retained at present rank and moved off the promotion stream. The benefit is that the CAF will have retained them until the end of their TOS or potentially longer if the CAF can keep them progressing laterally. This does not take away the member's option to moving later in life if that option becomes viable in their personal life. This is currently a strategy that is being developed under The Journey, giving the member the option of being on a restricted or unrestricted career path much like what is being offered in the Australian Defence Force. The CAF recognizes that in every occupation, there are contributors who are needed but they are not necessarily those that will be succession planned. The cultural implication of this is that the CAF currently does not accept the response of: the member is happy at his/her current rank and wishes

to remain where he/she is, both in the location and at this stage in his/her career.

The concept of Department of National Defence (DND) exploring additional relationships and partnerships with the private industry to facilitate discussions about the continued employment of the spouse, could be possible and may assist the military members' spouses to continue employment. Albeit to an extent, this would simply be DND advocating securing or at least encouraging their employment by facilitating the move of the military member. Furthermore, those relationships could potentially facilitate flexible work hours for the spouses., i.e., working from home if possible, without losing their jobs. Along the lines of facilitating the move, members should receive better lead time of one to two years, rather than a few months, of the anticipated posting and should have an idea to which posting location. Members are able to better decide on what effects a move will have on their families and whether the move of the entire family is warranted or not.

Lead time of up to two years regarding an expected posting relocation directly assists the spouse in commencing the job search at the new place, preparing for accreditation exams if need be and could also allow the spouse to commence second language training early enough, if the new geographical area requires it. Where extra courses need to be completed in order to receive accreditation to be employed in the new location, this expense should be incurred by the Department. Where second language training is required to become functionally fluent and employable, that is another cost that must be absorbed by DND. There are extenuating circumstances where a new position or sudden need exists that may not allow for the career managers to provide this lead time but if the CAF engages this method in the majority of cases, it could still prove to be successful in the long-term in retaining members.

Importantly, it is not known to what extent members actually know what benefits, opportunities, and information is available to them. For example, are all NCMs aware that there are several routes to a commission (e.g., UTPNCM, OCTP, CFR)? Are all members aware that there are educational reimbursement provisions? Are trades people aware that many CAF trades are certifiable with civilian credentials? That is to say, the first step in a retention program is information on what benefits are currently available.

Finally, exit interviews must be conducted with a HR specialist,<sup>85</sup> outside the chain of command immediately upon receipt of a release request. This is another approach that is being developed by The Journey. Reasons for release must be documented in order to potentially look at each member individually and each case must be dealt with separately. That said, it cannot be just an interview; it must have a goal. If the Branch and chain of command wants the member to stay in, then they must be willing to address the issues behind the release before the release is finalized. That is, the Unit/Branch retention specialist must be empowered and prepared to intervene to some defined extent on the members' behalf.

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<sup>85</sup> Canadian Forces Recruiting Group (CFRG) is a very large organization set up specifically to bring people into the CAF. It is staffed with trained recruiting specialists whose job is to “sell” the CAF to civilians; to convince them to join. Perhaps oddly there is no comparable organization tasked specifically with “selling” the CAF to already trained and experienced members who are considering leaving and who we want to stay.

## CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, a review of the major factors of dissatisfaction affecting the retention of military members in the CAF was discussed. Each factor was presented in how it affects the member and the degree of influence it may have on the retention of any person, be it military or civilian. A comparison was also made between the military member and the civilian employee in how each of the main factors affected them. The purpose was not to marginalize the effects on the civilian employee but to highlight the differences in how the military members' careers and personal lives are affected by conditions of military service.

As already mentioned in the introduction, The Journey has begun working on the development of strategies to increase retention by looking at the major dissatisfiers of serving members and providing new and improved policies and benefits. The SSE also states that Defence funding will increase over the next ten years to support the numerous initiatives contained within.<sup>86</sup> Thus, funding will not be provided to action all the initiatives in the immediate future. Furthermore, initiatives will need to be sequenced in order to go through legal review and Parliamentary approval. Some of the initiatives require only regulatory changes, those which are simply an implementation to internal Orders, Policies and Directives, whereas other initiatives are legislative changes that require amendments to provincial or federal laws. For the most part, implementation of these legislative initiatives will take place outside the CAF control, above the Minister of National Defence level.<sup>87</sup> With such a huge project to take on, it will take time to de-

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<sup>86</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence, "Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy," <http://dgaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>, (DND: Ottawa, 2017), 11.

<sup>87</sup> Department of National Defence, The Journey: Instruments and Authorities Table, April 2018.



velop these strategies before the CAF can see them come to fruition within the next few years.<sup>88</sup> Even then, while the policies will give members more options on different career paths, strict control will need to be made over the operational strength of the CAF to ensure the organization does not fail to meet its primary mission.

For any organization, the retention of trained and experienced members is just good business. There are enormous costs associated with members leaving, especially when they decide to release unexpectedly. For the CAF, there are recruitment and training costs, ranging from advertising, recruiters conducting pre-employment tests and screening to costs of training materials and trainers; this is in addition to the cost of time spent by supervisors and coworkers in bringing the new employee up to operational readiness on the job. These costs will have to be born if the CAF wants to remain viable. But the financial value to this must accompany a different attitude in how the CAF wants to maintain their operational capability. Most of the recommendations made come with a financial cost, some directly to the member and some in an indirect means. Therefore, continuous support and commitment will be required in order for both the CAF leadership and the Canadian government to effect change. CAF leadership must recognize the seriousness of the problem in order to make those changes and be willing to foster an open-minded culture in listening more to the voices of their members. Most changes that have rippled in the past were due to a few good people who recognized that change was necessary and that change came with a price tag.

CAF leadership needs to listen to and respect the values intrinsic to members particularly when considering a generation that is regularly questioning what career path they want, each giving themselves a unique interpretation of what stability is for a family or for a single member and the amount of money that they require to live comfortably. The level of support that the CAF

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

needs to provide its members has evolved over time. Although retention surveys were and still are being conducted, the exit interviews need to be documented and included in the retention surveys. The question of what are the non-negotiable factors that would retain the members need to be identified. Furthermore, some office needs to be empowered to intervene on behalf of a member seeking release to *reasonably* address dissatisfiers and ultimately retain the member.

Those who have never strapped on combat boots and stood in the battlefield must work closely with the military to make the right decisions on what the real price is to having an operational military organization. There are the surveys as mentioned in chapter one that speak volumes to what the members are looking for and what it will take to keep them. Leaders must be ready to make every conscious effort to leverage existing policies that make a positive difference in the lives of the members. Those statistics are there for the informed decisions to be made and must make it to the executive level that has the power to execute these changes. The commitment which the military requires from its members is deep and those ready to pledge their commitment to the service must be looked after. Their decision to serve must not be taken lightly. Job satisfaction, organizational culture and attitude are all factors that stimulate the level of commitment that a member will demonstrate to the organization. Ultimately, the CAF is neither operational nor an institution without its members to execute its mission. This is why innovative retention strategies and ideas must be tabled with as much flexibility as the organization can handle to ensure the success of its mission.

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