

Canadian
Forces
College

Collège
des
Forces
Canadiennes



REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES : CHALLENGE UNFULFILLED

Major Jolanta Harding

JCSP 44

Exercise Solo Flight

Disclaimer

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

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, as represented by the Minister of National Defence, 2019.

PCEMI 44

Exercice Solo Flight

Avertissement

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

© Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada, représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale, 2019.

CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 44 – PCEMI 44
2017 – 2019

EXERCISE *SOLO FLIGHT* – EXERCICE *SOLO FLIGHT*

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES: CHALLENGE UNFULFILLED

By Major Jolanta Harding

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

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

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES: CHALLENGE UNFULFILLED

Where women are full participants in a country's politics or economy, societies are more likely to succeed.

*– President Barack Obama
Speaking at the UN General Assembly,
September 2014*

The adoption of UN resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council in 2000 reaffirmed the importance of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations, as well as in post-conflict rebuilding efforts. The resolution brought forth the importance of women's involvement in all areas of "maintenance and promotion of peace and security"¹ and put more pressure on all nations to increase the participation of women and integrate gender perspectives in all military operations.

Canada has long understood the need for women's contribution to peace and security, both at home and at the international stage, and took action to address our commitment to the UN. Increasing women's participation in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is not only about increasing the size of the force, but more specifically, as a force multiplier in the capabilities it provides. The contribution that women can make by providing different perspectives and enabling access to a whole demographic group when participating in international operations cannot be overstated. Increasing the representation of women in the CAF is also in line with our national policies on equality and equity.

To move toward our national goals and UN commitments, Canada must increase the representation of women in its armed forces. As one of the leading nations in integrating women

¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) [on women and peace and security]. Accessed online on 7 May 2019. <http://www.un-documents.net/sr1325.htm>.

into all military trades, a number of initiatives, policies and practices with regards to recruiting women into the military have been put in place. For some time now, the CAF has been focused on increasing the gender gap within our own ranks. The Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) established a target of 25.1% of women in the CAF by 2026, as confirmed in our defence strategy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)*² and is continually looking at programs and strategies to enable the attainment of that target objective.

Despite the many initiatives undertaken by the CAF however, the most recent recruiting statistics show that the target of 25.1% female representation in the organization by the year 2026 is unattainable. This paper will examine 3 significant factors that individually and collectively influence the CAF ability to attract and retain female members, thus making us unable to meet the set goal unless significant changes take place. First, the military culture has always, and still does, intimidate women. Second, there are no great incentives available to women to make the CAF their employer of choice. Third, women are not only not choosing the military, but also leaving due to lack of flexibility in career planning and room for the unique demands of military families. The examination of each of the 3 factors will include a review of the pertinent policies currently in place, or their lack of.

Women constitute just slightly over 50% of Canadian population³. Statistics Canada shows that women of the age appropriate for enrolment in the CAF constitute roughly 9.6 million⁴. Currently in the CAF, overall women constitute 15.7%, and 18.7% of the officer ranks⁵.

²Canada. Department of National Defence: *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, Ottawa: DND, 2016, 12.

³ Canada. Statistics Canada: 2016 Population Census. Accessed online on 27 May 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1710013401>

⁴ Canada. Statistics Canada: Labour Force Survey. Accessed online on 27 May 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190208/dq190208a-eng.htm>

⁵ Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Armed Forces. "Backgrounder. Women in the Canadian Armed Forces." 7 March 2019. Accessed online 11 May 2019. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=women-in-the-canadian-armed-forces/izkjzqzeu>.

The overall representation has grown from 11.4 percent in 2001 to 15.7 percent as of February 2019; an annual growth rate of 0.24%. Since 2014 we have been able to reach 0.7% annual increase, while experiencing constant attrition. To achieve the target set by the CDS we must nearly double the recent annual growth rate in the next 7 years, and in order to come up in any way close to those targets, we must first address the way women view the military culture.

A renowned author and organizational consultant Simon Sinek states in his book titled “*Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*” that “corporate culture matters”. Sinek goes on to explain that it matters not only in attracting new people, but also in the level of satisfaction of those already employed and the likelihood of their retention. Employees who feel safe in their work environment and feel like they can rely on their coworkers have the highest job satisfaction, and thus remain committed to their employers. “When we have to protect ourselves from each other, the whole organization suffers. But when trust and cooperation thrive internally, [...] the organization grows stronger”⁶.

The Deschamps Report on *External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces* published in 2015, sheds a light on a very unfavourable culture. Marie Deschamps who was the External Review Authority (ERA) concluded that there is “an underlying sexualized culture in the CAF that is hostile to women and conducive to more serious incidents of sexual nature”⁷.

As a result of the report new policies were put in place and the CAF adapted Operation HONOUR⁸. Despite this prompt action from the CDS in bringing on a cultural shift, we find that

⁶ Sinek, Simon. “Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action”. Penguin Publishing Group. New York, December 2011: 11-12.

⁷ Deschamps, Marie. External Review Authority. External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces. 27 March 2015: i.

⁸Canada. Department of National Defence. Operation HONOUR. Accessed online 29 May 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/operation-honour.html>

not much has changed in the three years since the report was published. 2018 statistics show that the proportion of women in the Regular Force who were sexually assaulted (4.3%) was about four times higher than that of men (1.1%), in line with statistics produced two years earlier⁹. The prevalence of sexual assault was almost six times higher for women in the Primary Reserve (7.0%) than for men (1.2%)¹⁰. Although the findings were consistent with those observed in civilian population, one should rightfully expect that in a small organization like the CAF where one's life may be dependent on the person beside them, we would see much fewer occurrences of such cases. Rather than being afraid, we should be able to trust and depend on each other, and have those values set us apart from other organizations.

The existence of such “sexualized culture” has a huge impact on recruiting, as any potential female soldiers would be reluctant to join an organization in which the probability of being sexually assaulted presents to be quite high. This would also have a significant impact on any retention efforts, as any female member who has been subjected to such an experience would be unlikely to remain in the organization.

The Fall 2016 Report 5 of the Auditor General of Canada on CAF Recruitment and Retention noted attrition rates in 23 of the military occupations higher than 10%, and some of those occupations are ones favoured by women¹¹. Historically, women have consistently demonstrated higher attrition rates than male members. For example, women and men's overall attrition rates in the 70's were nearly 2:1. That trend held true even when the overall attrition

⁹Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Armed Forces Progress Report #4 Addressing Sexual Misconduct. Accessed online on 29 May 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/sexual-misbehaviour/progress-report-four.html>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Auditor General of Canada, “Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence,” 2016, 5.25, http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201611_05_e_41834.html.

rates dropped significantly in the 80's.¹² Consequently, such attrition is not uncommon. Similar decrease in representation of women was noted in the federally regulated private sector, and other sectors of the economy, and follows a similar downward trend in the overall representation of employed women in Canada.¹³ An exception in CAF attrition was noted during the first three years of service when male non-commissioned members have demonstrated higher attrition rates than female non-commissioned members¹⁴. This perhaps offers an opportunity for the implementation of incentives to entice women to continue their service past the initial 3-year period, and currently there are no such incentives offered by the CAF. The idea of military service incentives for women will be discussed later on in the paper.

To add further to the matter of organizational culture, according to Reginald W. Bibby's book on millennials, young people of that generation, young women being a large portion of that group, are looking for opportunities where their highly rated values of trust and honesty will be the best fit.¹⁵ Given the current perception of a highly sexualized culture where one cannot trust his or her buddy, doesn't favourably present the working environment sought-after by the millennials. In addition, the Millennials have also indicated having very close relationships with their families, specifically the parents, and having to be away from them for long periods of time, while on training or posting to another location in Canada, most likely remote, is a detrimental factor in joining the CAF full time¹⁶.

In addition to the negative environment created by the prevalence of sexualized culture, and isolation from friends and family, the military is portrayed in the recent media as a callous

¹² Canada. Employment and Social Development Canada. Employment Equity Act: Annual Report 2018. Accessed online on 27 May 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/labour-standards/reports/employment-equity-2018.html#h2.04-h3.01>.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Bibby, Reginald W. "Canada's Emerging Millennials." *Transition* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 3

and bureaucratic organization who cares more about the dollar than addressing issues of wellness of their serving members and veterans. While the SSE proclaims, “people first”, as an organization we still have a long way to go. Anecdotal evidence clearly suggests that we are still very much focused on the institutional requirements and have very little resources to give attention to individual requirements of our current members. There has been plenty of reports in the media however, of veterans struggling to make a life on reduced benefits and they are more prevalent than those speaking to programs and opportunities available to those who still serve and those who leave the military. All that contributes to the military culture being viewed in an unfavourable light.

Military culture is only one of the reasons for which retention and recruiting targets fail short, but it is an important one. As more and more new millennials enter the employment age, the military culture will be a determining factor on whether or not they find the CAF to be an employer of choice. Currently, in Canada there are upwards of 9.6 million women between 17 and 55 years old¹⁷. As the key demographic looking for full-time employment, what incentives are there for them to consider CAF as their choice of employer?

The average starting annual salary in the CAF is \$35,800 for a Non-Commissioned Member, and \$57,300 for a commissioned officer. Those who join the military under the ROTP, through RMC or other university program, receive free education in addition to earning a basic monthly salary, amounting to around \$20,000. A college diploma earns an average of \$45,434. The average starting salary for a university graduate with a bachelor’s degree is around \$54,300. While the military also offers considerable benefits for the member and their family, as well as a pension for life after 25 years of service (a rare benefit these days), women do not seem to see

¹⁷ Canada. Statistics Canada: Labour Force Survey. Accessed online on 27 May 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190208/dq190208a-eng.htm>

the advantage of joining the military to begin earning income. The exception may be women entering as officers, where the recent statistics show a slight increase¹⁸. With Canada's unemployment rate hovering around 6%¹⁹, and only 4.6% of women 25 and over being unemployed²⁰, there are obviously many opportunities for women on the civilian side. So again, what incentive is there for them to consider an occupation that comes with unlimited liability like the CAF.

Historically, occupations which were undermanned would offer signing up bonuses to those who join the CAF in those occupations and complete the required level of training. Currently, the only occupations for which signing bonuses are offered is the Cook trade²¹.

There are no incentives or signing bonuses available for women as a means of attraction and retention. The target of 25.1% women will not be met without incentivising women to join. That fact needs to be addressed the same way as distressed occupations are, by offering signing bonuses to women who join the forces and remain for a certain period of time, and as one available incentive to join the CAF. Although many stakeholders question the idea of incentivizing military service, the UN recognizes the validity of incentivizing the participation of women in peacekeeping operations. Current peacekeeping missions see an extremely low number of female military personnel. On average since 2011, the representation of women in UN missions is 3 percent of the deployed military force, and women are mostly employed as support

¹⁸ Berthiaume, Lee. "Defence chief admits slower-than-expected growth in female representation". The Canadian Press, 17 January 2019. Accessed online on 28 May 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/defence-women-vance-targets-1.4981603>.

¹⁹ Canada. Statistics Canada: Labour Force Survey. Accessed online on 27 May 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190208/dq190208a-eng.htm>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Recruiting page Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting Website. Accessed 27 May 2019. <https://forces.ca/en/life-in-the-military/#bt>.

staff rather than as operators.²² Even with Resolution 1325 adopted in 2000, there has been little change in that regard.

Currently Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) are reimbursed a flat rate for every military member, male or female, who participates in a UN mission. The Council is proposing two options to TCCs as incentives to encourage a higher participation of women. One option is to establish a slightly higher reimbursement rate for women deploying than for men, keeping all other factors equal. The other, is to establish a “gender-balance” premium reimbursed as a percentage for meeting any of the pre-established criteria. Those incentives could then be passed on to the female members who participate in UN missions. The above information suggests that there is validity in implementing financial incentives to attract women where they are currently needed in the CAF.

Incentives alone, however, won’t fix the problem unless the issues of equality and equity are addressed. The CAF has implemented the policy on equality and equity as per the Employment Equity Act. To highlight the difference between equity and equality the definitions need to be mentioned. Equality means giving everyone the same thing and treating everyone the same way. It is what we consider fair. Equality, however, only works if everyone starts from the same place, has the same abilities, resources and experiences. Equity on the other hand, while provides access to the same opportunities, recognizes that not everyone starts from the same level, and thus their needs may be different.

While the CAF has many policies and practices in place that ensure men and women are treated equal, more must be done to ensure equitable treatment of women. To reach equality and

²²United Nations. Women on Peace and Security. “Exploratory Options on Using Financial Incentives to Increase the Percentage of Military Women in UN Peacekeeping Missions”. January 2015. Accessed online on 28 May 2019. <http://wps.unwomen.org/resources/briefs/financial.pdf>.

thus encourage more women to join the military the CAF must assure “fairness of treatment for both women and men, according to their respective needs.”²³

A significant factor in career selection for women is the fact that they are still predominantly the primary caregivers of children, even though it is widely accepted today that men contribute more in caring for children than in the past, thus experiencing significant pressures while managing both their professional and family lives. In a survey conducted in 2017, it was shown that of all Regular Force females who have children, 53% are part of a service couple and 23% are single and would therefore carry significant responsibilities for their children in addition to their professional ones²⁴. Also, women with children seek stability in their lives and want a sense of community when it comes to raising them, thus proximity to family is an important factor to them. A number of studies conducted with a goal to study attrition and specifically female attrition in the early 2000 showed that although men and women have many of the same reasons for leaving the CAF, women tended to cite social or familial reasons more often, while men tended to cite work-related reasons²⁵. Women consistently indicated that work tempo such as frequent and prolonged training, as well as deployments affect their quality of life and were among the reported reasons for leaving the CF.²⁶ Specifically, women indicated family related matters as one of the most deciding factors in the choice to leave the military:

Inability to balance work and family life, problems associated with being absent from home during postings, lack of support services when members were away from home or were deployed, lack of provisions for single parent families, and

²³ Canada. Employment and Social Development Canada. Employment Equity in Federally Regulated Workplaces. Last modified 16 February 2018. Accessed online 27 May 2019.

²⁴Manser, Lynda. “State of Military Families in Canada: Issues Facing Regular Force Members and Their Families”. CF Morale and Welfare Services, 2018.

²⁵ Davis Karen. (1997) Understanding Women’s Exit from the Canadian Forces: Implications for Integration? in: L. Weinstein & C. White (Eds) *Wives and warriors: women in the military in the United States and Canada* (Westport, CT, Bergin & Garvey), 188.

²⁶ Ibid.

spouses'/partners' careers being negatively affected by postings emerged as critical issues under this general theme.²⁷

In her article titled "*Understanding Women's Exit from the Canadian Forces*", Karen Davis asserts that ultimately women leave the military because of "ongoing discrimination associated with administrative and psychological isolation", and stresses related to perceptions of gender roles, maternity and family status. "Women chose to leave when the organizational environment became a continuous source of stress which significantly compromised their quality of life".²⁸

To address these significant issues, we must recognize that women's needs are different than men's, that their obligations are still largely to their children as the primary care providers, and that their priorities often change once they have children. Thus, to encourage retention and recruiting, we must adapt our policies to address such equity related issues by enabling access to better and more child care services, allowing for work from home opportunities, and making it easier for them to take an operational pause, even if it means Leave Without Pay for an extended period, and without the fear of adverse effects on their career progression when they return. This list is by no means exhaustive, and new policies may be necessary in addition to revising current ones. We will need to think outside of the proverbial box to tackle this problem and ensure the success of our organization is enabled by the proper representation of women.

As presented in this research paper, there are significant issues contributing to the CAF's lack of significant progress in attracting, recruiting and retaining women. Unfavourable military

²⁷Otis, Nancy., Michelle Straver. "Review of Attrition and Retention Research for the Canadian Forces". Directorate of Strategic Military Personnel Research and Analysis. October 2008,

²⁸ Davis Karen. (1997) *Understanding Women's Exit from the Canadian Forces: Implications for Integration?* in: L. Weinstein & C. White (Eds) *Wives and warriors: women in the military in the United States and Canada* (Westport, CT, Bergin & Garvey), 179-198.

culture precipitated by reports of prevailing sexual violence towards military women is a major deterrent. Lack of incentives that would draw the attention of young women and influence them to give the military a chance, as well as encourage those who are already in to stay, provides no appeal to put us ahead of the other employers. Finally, ‘single focus’ policies regarding the equitable treatment of female service members compounds the problem further.

Given the above factors, the established target of 25.1% of representation of women in the CAF is still a distant objective. One could say that it is a “bridge too far” considering that the CAF is struggling to recruit and retain military members in general. Notwithstanding that, it is considerably harder to move towards meeting the established target when half of the population sees the organization as a highly “sexualized culture [...] (where) the pervasive use of language that is demeaning to women, sexual jokes and innuendos, and low-level harassment [...] is rooted in cultural norms that permit a degree of discriminatory and harassing conduct within the organization”, as stated in the Deschamps report.²⁹ To help address the cultural barriers, we must continue to attempt to recruit more women, as well as focus on retaining the ones we already have by rebuilding a culture representative of the values that make a society stronger. Trust, pride and professionalism need to be our founding blocks. By providing more incentives for women to stay, better policies providing more flexibility to those who balance work and family demands, as well as address the specific needs that women face to make the organization more equitable, we can get to where the CDS wants us to be. And, there is no doubt that we will get there, but it will take considerably more time than the 7 years we have left on the original target.

²⁹Deschamps, Marie. External Review Authority. External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces. 27 March 2015: ii.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Auditor General of Canada. "Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence," 2016. http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201611_05_e_41834.html.
- Berthiaume, Lee. "Defence chief admits slower-than-expected growth in female representation". The Canadian Press, 17 January 2019. Accessed online on 28 May 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/defence-women-vance-targets-1.4981603>.
- Bibby, Reginald W. "Canada's Emerging Millennials." *Transition* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2009).
- Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Armed Forces. *Backgrounder. Women in the Canadian Armed Forces*. 7 March 2019. Accessed online 11 May 2019. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=women-in-the-canadian-armed-forces/izkjzue>
- Canada. Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: National Defence, 2017.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Forces Employment Equity Report: 2011-2012. Accessed online 12 May 2019. http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2014/mdn-dnd/D3-31-2012-eng.pdf.
- Canada. Department of National Defence. Operation HONOUR. Accessed online 29 May 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/operation-honour.html>
- Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Armed Forces Progress Report #4 Addressing Sexual Misconduct. Accessed online on 29 May 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/sexual-misbehaviour/progress-report-four.html>
- Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Armed Forces Recruiting Website. Accessed 27 May 2019. <https://forces.ca/en/life-in-the-military/#bt>
- Canada. Employment and Social Development Canada. Employment Equity in Federally Regulated Workplaces. Last modified 16 February 2018. Accessed online 27 May 2019.
- Canada. Employment and Social Development Canada. Employment Equity Act: Annual Report 2018. Accessed online on 27 May 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/labour-standards/reports/employment-equity-2018.html#h2.04-h3.01>.

- Canada. Statistics Canada: 2016 Population Census. Accessed online on 27 May 2019.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=1710013401>.
- Canada. Statistics Canada: Labour Force Survey. Accessed online on 27 May 2019.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190208/dq190208a-eng.htm>.
- Davis, Karen. "Understanding Women's Exit from the Canadian Forces: Implications for Integration?" in L. Weinstein & C. White (Eds) *Wives and warriors: women in the military in the United States and Canada* (Westport, CT, Bergin & Garvey).
- Deschamps, Marie. External Review Authority. External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces. 27 March 2015.
- Manser, Lynda. "State of Military Families in Canada: Issues Facing Regular Force Members and Their Families". CF Morale and Welfare Services, 2018.
- Otis, Nancy., Michelle Straver. "Review of Attrition and Retention Research for the Canadian Forces". Directorate of Strategic Military Personnel Research and Analysis. October 2008
- Privy Council Office, Innovations Hub. "Increasing Recruitment of Women Into the Canadian Armed Forces – Behavioural Insights Project". 2016-2018
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 [on women and peace and security] (2000). Accessed online on 7 May 2019. <http://www.un-documents.net/sr1325.htm>.
- United Nations. Women on Peace and Security. "Exploratory Options on Using Financial Incentives to Increase the Percentage of Military Women in UN Peacekeeping Missions". January 2015. Accessed online on 28 May 2019.
<http://wps.unwomen.org/resources/briefs/financial.pdf>.