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## RECRUITING AND RETENTION OF WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

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*SERVICE PAPER - ÉTUDE MILITAIRE*

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## **RECRUITING AND RETENTION OF WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

### **AIM**

1. This service paper will focus on the process of the recruitment and retention of women in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). It will discuss how, although the CAF vision is committed to increasing the percentage of serving women to 25%, the current percentage is far from it. This paper will discuss what the potential impediments and solutions to achieving this goal are. Also, it will focus on the reasons of unwillingness of the women to join the military and possible solutions. Finally, this paper will compare the Canadian experience in the recruitment and retention issues of women with the Jordanian Armed Forces experience to compare lessons learned from both sides.

### **INTRODUCTION**

2. “Women have been serving in Canada’s military for over a century and today play a pivotal role in defending Canada’s safety and security. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) was one of the first military forces to allow women to serve in all occupations.”<sup>1</sup> The Canadian government and the CAF have a goal to make women a more effective part of the armed forces in the future to achieve equity and diversity in the CAF.

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<sup>1</sup> “Women in the Canadian Armed Forces.” (Ottawa – National Defence / Canadian Armed Forces -March 7, 2017)

3. “Although the Canadian Armed Forces had established a goal for the representation of women among its ranks, it set this overall goal with no specific targets by occupation.”<sup>2</sup> The CAF has not applied any exceptional recruitment equity procedures although it is clear that this goal depend heavily on increase the recruiting in order to reach that goal.<sup>3</sup> The percentage of that goal was 25 % during the audit period; but till this time, women representation in the Regular Force is 14 %.

4. “In February 2016, the Canadian Armed Forces indicated that women represented about 14 percent of its Regular Force, or about 9,500 members.”<sup>4</sup> In the 2014–15 periods, numbers showed that around 50 percent of women in the Canadian Armed Forces were focused in six professions: “supply technicians, resource management support clerks, nursing officers, medical technicians, logistics officers, and cooks.”<sup>5</sup> During the 2014–15 and 2015–16 fiscal years, 14 percent of new recruits were women. “The Canadian Armed Forces had established the overall goal of increasing the percentage of women by 1 percent every year but had not set specific targets for each occupation.”<sup>6</sup>

## **DISCUSSION**

### **History Background**

5. The Nursing service in the CAF in the 1920s and 1930s did not have significant female representation until it had a great increase through WWII. By 1945, the number of nursing

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<sup>2</sup> “Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence.” (2016 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> “Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence.” (2016 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, 2016), 5.25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 5.33.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 5.30.

sisters' reached 4480 that were serving in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and in the medical services of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN). The RCAF similarly employed 14 women as medical officers. Through the war, there was a need for females in these roles as the lack of men caused the requirement for extra recruiting of Canadian females in many occupations which had previously been reserved just for men.<sup>7</sup>

6. In the year 1941, 45,423 women joined the armed forces. They joined as religious, logistics, signals and support personnel, in order to afford the opportunity to men to fight in combat. "In 1954-55 the regular army and navy also began to recruit women, although in much smaller numbers than the 3000 women then in the air force."<sup>8</sup> After that period the recruitment of women in the CAF started to increase especially after "the 1971 Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the Canadian Human Rights Commission ruling of 1989."<sup>9</sup> Although the goal is to reach the 25% percentage of women in all occupations in the CAF in 2025; "The CAF's representation of women has grown from 11.4 percent in 2001 to 15 percent as of February 2016. In numbers, this translates to 13 863 women out of a total CAF membership of 92 617."<sup>10</sup> This increasing in numbers indicates that there is a willingness from women to serve in the CAF if the circumstances were suitable for them.

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<sup>7</sup> Babbara Dundas, and ROGER SARTY "Women in the Military." (Historica Canada, 2014).  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/women-in-the-military/>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>10</sup> "Women in the Canadian Armed Forces." (Ottawa – National Defence / Canadian Armed Forces -March 7, 2017)

## Reasons Make Women Unwilling to Join the CAF

7. There are many reasons women may be unsure about the military and are u about joining the military and be unwilling to join the CAF, despite the CAF being a dependable job which offers security. Some of these reasons are related to the women personally and some related to the CAF environment “such as a Lack of work-life balance, Parental responsibilities, and the need for increased family stability to care for children or aging parents.”<sup>11</sup> The sexual misconduct and sexual harassment is a big concern in the CAF and it is one of the main reasons that make women think carefully when decide to join military. “Issues such as child care, spousal employment, and lack of geographic stability, pregnancy leave, and single parenthood are all factors that contribute to the departure of women from the CAF.”<sup>12</sup>

8. All these reasons make women think carefully before joining the military because most “women want to avoid careers that are physically risky; are deemed to offer poor work-life balance; and options that would require moving far away.”<sup>13</sup> Most of the women look to have balance between their careers and their own life, especially given that women still may be the primary care-giver in their home. On the other hand, women are also concerned about sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in military especially after the media rose that issue as a serious case. One of the reports claimed “that when women start moving into male sanctuaries, some men feel threatened so they strike back by using humiliation or intimidation.”<sup>14</sup> Other reasons may affect women participation in the CAF such as “the changing nature of conflict,

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<sup>11</sup> T.M.Brown, “Changing the Unchangeable: Recruitment and Retention of Women in the Canadian Military.” (Exercise Solo Flight Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2014), 12.

<sup>12</sup> “Women in the Canadian Armed Forces.” (National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces 6 March, 2014), Project number: BG-14 006.

<sup>13</sup> Ryan Tumilty, “Canadian women not interested in military careers: survey.” (*Metro Published* 28 Feb 2017). <http://www.metronews.ca/news/ottawa/2017/02/28/canadian-women-not-interested-in-military-jobs-says-survey-.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Noémi Mercier and Alec Castonguay, “Our Military’s Disgrace,” *Maclean’s*, 16 May 2014.

changes in population diversity, increasing age when women have children, increasing number of recruited women who have children, and an increasing number of female immigrants.”<sup>15</sup>

### **The Strategies of Recruitment and Retention in the CAF**

9. The strategies used in the CAF to reach 25% of women’s representation in the military were not effective enough to influence them to join the army; however, there are still some old recruiting procedures which need to be changed such the example of the *one-size-fits-all* system which could be placed with flexible sets of policies and programs that would be beneficial for everyone. Especially that women how wanted to involve in military life need to feel work-life balance, flexible procedures for pregnancy and childbearing leave, and provision of child care. All these things need to be considered by the CAF to influence women to join military. As mentioned in Auditor General of Canada’s report 5; “a women’s employment opportunity program will be implemented to inform and educate women about the benefits of a Canadian Armed Forces career. A Canadian Armed Forces retention strategy will be implemented to tailor policies and programs to increase retention.”<sup>16</sup>

10. “The CAF recruiting strategy for women focuses on raising awareness of career opportunities in the CAF. This is done through advertising, job postings, media partnerships, social media, and individual recruiter efforts.”<sup>17</sup> All these means might help to increase the

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<sup>15</sup> T.M.Brown, “Changing the Unchangeable: Recruitment and Retention of Women in the Canadian Military.” (Exercise Solo Flight Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2014), 12.

<sup>16</sup> “Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defence.” (2016 Spring Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, 2016), 5.34.

<sup>17</sup> “Women in the Canadian Armed Forces.” (Ottawa – National Defence / Canadian Armed Forces - March 7, 2017).

number of women who are willing to join the CAF if those means are used in the proper way and if it had been controlled and driven by experts.

### **Comparison of Recruiting Women between the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and the CAF**

11. “Since 1950 women in Jordan started to join the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF), their role in military was as teachers in military schools. However, the amount of females in the JAF persisted very few till 1962, when Nursing College was established.”<sup>18</sup> The number of cadet women’s first group was eight who graduated from the college in 1965. Those eight cadets were promoted to second lieutenants into the Royal Medical Corps after finishing the demanded trainings. Later, the women’s number who joined the Jordanian Armed Forces has increased.

12. “Although women have always been on equal footing as far as pay is concerned, with their fellow servicemen, their role in the Armed Forces was enhanced by the creation of the Directorate of Military Women’s Affairs in 1995.”<sup>19</sup> The Directorate is looking forward to improve the women in the armed forces and achieve that providing women with more responsibilities, additional training, and eventually they had the chance to serve the country. “Women can enroll as civilian employees or as soldiers (whether officers, non-commissioned officers, or private soldiers). They have always received equal pay to those of their male counter parts.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> “The role of women in Jordan Armed Forces.” (NATIONAL REPORT JORDAN ARMED FORCES 2006). 1. [https://www.nato.int/ims/2006/win/pdf/jordan\\_brief.pdf](https://www.nato.int/ims/2006/win/pdf/jordan_brief.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 1. The first citation has to be cited.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 2.



13. Many things were taken into consideration to achieve equity between women and men in the armed forces such: length of military service, promotions, and payment. Superiority and specialized qualification are required as rules for promotion. Women in military can take 3 months maternity leave with full payment.

14. “The total number of women in the military is 4883: 1203 officers, 2421 servicewomen, and 1259 civilians. The majority of women occupy administrative positions.”<sup>21</sup> After 1990, women started to take part in locations which were firmly reserved for males, such as; “Royal Guard Protection Unit, military police, and military intelligence.”<sup>22</sup> Major general in the Royal Medical Services is the highest rank reached by a woman in the JAF, and Brigadier General in the General HQs.

15. In the JAF Women have the choice of the fields they would like to serve in such as:
- a. secretaries, administrators, architects, computer programmers and engineers.
  - b. The Royal Medical Services as doctors, dentists, and nurses.
  - c. Military Policewomen.
  - d. Education in military schools and other departments as instructors and teachers.
  - e. Intelligence officers.
  - f. Finance, military law.
  - g. Body guards at the Royal Guard Protection brigade.
  - h. Flight Control Assistants, Flight Control Operations.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> “The role of women in Jordan Armed Forces.” (NATIONAL REPORT JORDAN ARMED FORCES 2006), 2. [https://www.nato.int/ims/2006/win/pdf/jordan\\_brief.pdf](https://www.nato.int/ims/2006/win/pdf/jordan_brief.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 2.

16. Retention in JAF among women is very low because of family causes such as being a way from home especially for those who are married, and child care. Nowadays young females are willing to be enlisted in the JAF because of the healthcare coverage, payment and benefits, education, professional training and most significantly they are willing to serve their country.<sup>24</sup>

17. In the JAF there are many military institutes which give academic degrees such as masters, and bachelor degrees in many kinds of studies. Women in military can get these degrees and their study is covered by the government. There is no fear amongst women from sexual harassment in military because it's considered one of the biggest crimes in military and the one who is charged in any case of sex misconduct might be jailed from three to seven years. On the other hand sex misconduct is against the religion regulations and against the culture of the country. There is no collision in serving in military and religion; "Muslim servicewomen are allowed to wear the *hijab* as part of their uniform. This approach demonstrated to Jordanians that women can serve their country without jeopardizing cultural norms. In fact, Jordanians are very proud of the women serving."<sup>25</sup>

## CONCLUSION

17. The CAF is considered one of the most developed all over the world in recruiting women. The enrollment of women in the CAF reflects the diversity and the equity between men and women in the country. The participation of women in the military in Canada is one of the oldest in the world.

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<sup>24</sup> "History of Women in the Jordan Armed Forces."  
[https://www.jaf.mil.jo/Contents/Woman\\_in\\_Army\\_forcesar.aspx#.WcAv1bYrKi4](https://www.jaf.mil.jo/Contents/Woman_in_Army_forcesar.aspx#.WcAv1bYrKi4)

<sup>25</sup> Jumana Kawar, "Women in International Security: Jordanian Women's Evolving Role in the Armed Forces." (WIIS Global, 2017), <http://wiisglobal.org/2017/11/28/jordanian-womens-evolving-role-in-the-armed-forces/>.

18. The main goal of women participation in the military, which the CAF is attempting to achieve by the year 2026, is 25%. At the moment the percentage is almost 15% and the efforts are focusing on achieving this goal by rising the percentage 1% every year. The CAF strategy of recruiting women concentrates on showing the career chances in the military. “This is done through advertising, job postings, media partnerships, social media, and individual recruiter efforts.”<sup>26</sup> Active involvement has been done with many partners who may have influence in the society like key leaders, women who have professional associations, teachers, to showcase the diversity of recruitment chances.

19. Recruiting and retention of women in the CAF faces many issues such as work-life balance, family and child care, pregnancy and maternity leave, and sexual misconduct and sex harassment. All these issues cause many women concern about serving in the military, and think carefully before joining military. On other hand, the recruiting procedures that used by CAF recruiting program is not helping to influence women to apply for military careers and there is lack of flexibility in the recruiting system.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

20. Many recommendations might be taken in the consideration to improve the recruitment and retention of women’s process in the CAF in order achieve the of 25% goal. These recommendations are to raise the employment of women into the CAF such as:

- a. Make applying online easier for those how want to apply to join the CAF.
- b. Review the ways of responding on the applicants.

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<sup>26</sup> “Women in the Canadian Armed Forces.” (Ottawa – National Defence / Canadian Armed Forces, 2017)

- c. Make sure that the women who want to apply for military are aware about the military environment like physical trainings, type of occupation, and the requirements of the career.
- d. Use media and social media to influence women about the military service and the benefits of joining the CAF.
- e. “Build research on CAF policies focusing on the five key areas identified—deployments and relocation; childcare support; leave without pay; long-term commitment/ability to resign; and culture/diversity.”<sup>27</sup>
- f. “Continue to explore and develop new enrollment support initiatives, such as ‘try-before-you-buy’ and mentorship programs.”<sup>28</sup>
- g. Create a safe work environment by taking all the necessary means to prevent sexual abuse and harassment by using law and military admin procedures like firing out of the military.
- h. Maintain balance between serving in military and family responsibilities, and give a chance for women to adapt the new environment of military life and adjust it with family issues.
- i. Study the succeeded cases in the allies’ armed forces of recruiting women like NATO, or the USA military. There are many countries that succeeded in recruiting women in armed forces not only in medical corps but also in combat arms and they were successful.

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27 “BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS PROJECT: INCREASING RECRUITMENT OF WOMEN INTO THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES.” ( Privy Council Office, Innovation Hub,2015),7.  
[https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pco-bcp/documents/pdfs/CAF\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/pco-bcp/documents/pdfs/CAF_ENG.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 7.

21. Finally, the recruitment and retention of women in the CAF still needs more efforts from the Canadian government of and the CAF's Headquarters. There must be collaboration in order to solve all the issues that might affect negatively the women representation in the CAF. There should be intelligent ways to convince women to join the army and to prevent those who are in the military from resigning and leaving the CAF.

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