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ENABLING THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES: RECRUITMENT OF WOMEN STRATEGIES

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ENABLING THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES: RECRUITMENT OF WOMEN STRATEGIES

AIM

1. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is currently not recruiting nor retaining sufficient women. The female population represents more than 50% of the total Canadian population yet women only represent 15% of the CAF.¹ Women entering the work force increased by 75.5% since the 1950's yet women are not joining the CAF in significant numbers and this needs to change to reflect the society we live in.² The purpose of this paper is to analyze the 2017 Canada's Defence Policy's 2017 (Strong Secure Engaged, or SSE) goal of 25% women in the CAF by 2026.

INTRODUCTION

2. Despite having women in the CAF for 100 years, full integration only occurred on 8 March 2000 when women became eligible to serve on submarines. The accolades of achieving full integration are yet to be realized as there remain low numbers of women in many trades that have yet to truly welcome an influx of talented women within their ranks. In fact, there has been little to no growth in the number of women in the CAF for decades.³

¹ Strong, Secure, and Engaged Canada's Defence Policy. 2017, 12.

² Statistics Canada. Women and Paid Work. 9 March 2017. Last accessed 1 February 2018.
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14694-eng.htm>

³ Andrea Lane. Special men: The gendered militarization of the Canadian Armed Forces. *International Journal*. Vol. 72(4).2017, 466.

3. The areas that requires study to achieve the growth of women in the CAF includes recruiting followed by the training system and finally determining retention issues that affect why women leave the CAF. Each of these separate areas requires extensive analysis; however, the focus of this paper will be on recruiting. Recruiting is viewed as the most important area to reform because this is the organization that engages the public to recruit new officers and NCMs and without this initial step the latter two activities would not occur.

4. Three areas within recruiting need examination prior to determining possible solutions to achieving a CAF that has 25% women by 2026. First, educate new recruits and those who support their enrollment, such as their family/ care givers and key members in the education system. Second, provide an experiential opportunity for prospective CAF members to take part in the life of a soldier, sailor, airman or airwomen. Third, set expectations for new members through an honest dialogue that does not sensationalize life in the CAF. In turn, analyzing the recruitment process provides the locations where friction points exist and helps identify what initiatives could be used to generate new female enrollments in the CAF.

DISCUSSION

5. At present, the ability for women in Canadian society to learn about the CAF is limited. Mainstream media does not always provide a full view or understanding of the opportunities in the CAF and online Internet searches do not portray a cradle to grave description of what a career in the CAF means. The CAF needs to look beyond mainstream media as highlighting the problems in the CAF and not educating women on what the tasks of the CAF are runs counterproductive to recruitment. This is not to say that these stories are inaccurate, it is merely

pointing out that mainstream media coverage of the CAF can lead the Canadian public to develop a bias and misunderstanding about what CAF members do on a day to day basis.

6. The CAF and more specifically, the Combat Arms needs to rebrand itself and change the misogynistic attitudes that perpetuates from within and public perceptions.⁴ Given the media attention towards the unacceptable sexual misconduct, there needs to be an equal effort by the CAF to regularly report and update the public on the progress of Operation HONOUR. The public needs to know the CAF is undergoing a transformation by rebuilding a new culture that appreciates anyone choosing to wear a military uniform or work in a civilian capacity.

7. The CAF is taking a step in the right direction by becoming media savvy and using social media that appeals to a broader audience. One social media tool that was used by the department of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) was a live video with the Minister of Veteran Affairs, Seamus O'Regan and the Deputy Minister of Veteran Affairs, retired Chief Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Walter Natynczyk.⁵ VAC committed to participating in more live videos which is an excellent way to express a message that goes unfiltered by media outlets and can be reviewed later for anyone that missed the discussion. The Facebook live feed capability could also be leveraged using a panel of military members to include female CAF members that can answer questions of women or their parents/ care givers and address any possible concerns.

⁴ Andrea Lane. Special men: The gendered militarization of the Canadian Armed Forces. *International Journal*. Vol. 72(4).2017, 465.

⁵ Veterans Affairs Facebook Page. Last accessed 1 February 2018.
<https://www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairsCanada/videos/1985409258374778/>

8. In addition to the above example of leveraging social media, the 5th Canadian Division of Canada along with the other Divisions across the country are active on Facebook and Twitter.⁶ There is a current push for Reserve summer employment that guarantees Reservists' four consecutive summers of employment which assists the funding for those attending university or college. These job opportunities are circulating via social media and the success of such campaigns is not known but at least the CAF is communicating in a space where their target audience is present. The summer campaign program for Reserves provides a great opportunity for women to experience the CAF. Reserve employment also permits educational pursuits in addition to a potential transfer to the Regular force or remain in the Reserves as a valued member that contributes to the goals outlined in SSE. A healthy Reserve force benefits the CAF and these new strategies to encourage participation through guaranteed summer employment is a step in the right direction.

9. In addition to promoting the four-year summer employment program for Reservists, additional efforts to attract new recruits occurred in 2017. One such initiative focused on Reserve units holding simultaneous open houses across the country to bolster their unit membership.⁷ A spokesperson for one of the Reserve units commented to a CBC reporter that they were willing to sign anyone, "At the moment, I think we'll pretty much take anybody who comes in. We're really looking to expand the numbers."⁸ These remarks do not reflect a CAF that is building itself with people that are carefully screened to ensure a healthy culture with long-term success. The

⁶ 5th Canadian Division Facebook Page. Last accessed 1 February 2018.
<https://www.facebook.com/CANArmyAtlantic/>

⁷ Bonnie Allen. CBC News. Canada's army looks to recruit reservists in face of dwindling numbers. 30 September 2017. Last accessed 1 February 2018 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/canada-s-army-looks-to-recruit-reservists-in-face-of-dwindling-numbers-1.4313849>

⁸ *Ibid.*

current CDS Gen Vance also emphasized the importance of getting good people in the CAF, “it’s not just getting people through the door, it’s getting the right people through the door.”⁹

10. It is, however, outstanding for the Reserves to open their doors to the public and promote transparency and a desire to connect with communities. The Reserve units should also be emphasizing the great tradition and history of its Reserve units. Reservists should speak proudly of the work they complete on behalf of Canadians that span not only from coast to coast but all around the world. There is a large percentage of women in the Reserves compared to the Regular force and these women would make excellent spokespeople. This messaging will entice new members who can be selected based on demonstrating good values and morals with a desire to support and defend their country.

11. The CAF indigenous program that has operated for years provides a model for women introduced to the military.¹⁰ Of the three sub-programs the summer training program offers an experience that provides a good indoctrination to the military basic training program and it includes a \$3500.00 payment at the end of the six-weeks.¹¹ By repurposing existing programs that run annually in the CAF requires minimal work from a planning perspective.

12. In a separate and what appeared to be well-planned recruiting opportunity, the CAF initiated a program in 2017 where women had the opportunity to participate in a ten-day program

⁹ Lee Berthiaume. The Canadian Press. Military still short thousands of personnel despite small increase in force-members. 4 January 2018. Last accessed 1 February 2018. <https://globalnews.ca/news/3946514/military-short-thousands-personnel/>

¹⁰ Strong, Secure, and Engaged Canada’s Defence Policy. 2017, 21.

¹¹ Government of Canada. Programs for Indigenous Peoples. Last accessed 1 February 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/caf-jobs/indigenous-programs.html>

in Ontario and Quebec. This program was called Women in Force Program (WiFP) and it offered an excellent recruitment opportunity.¹² The program offered women to gain first-hand experience without committing to a military contract. The program provided a venue to speak with members of the military and gain a better understanding of career opportunities that exist within the CAF.

13. The provinces where WiFP occurred in 2017 represents locations where most CAF members are recruited; however, WiFP could be introduced across the country. There is either a Regular or Reserve Force that exists in every province and territory which could serve as a recruitment hub to facilitate a training event and give more women an exposure to experience the CAF without signing a contract. The exposure would eliminate myths about the CAF and construct a positive narrative that could be built on by recruitment staff. Initiatives such as WiFP broaden the overall CAF experience for potential new members where they can gain a better understanding of what career opportunities exist in today's CAF and should be expanded across the country.

14. Another example of exploring new initiatives took place in Edmonton, Alberta where a two-day event that focused on school guidance counsellors, providing the CAF an opportunity to educate those who advise teenagers on future career opportunities.¹³ This short two-day initiative provided guidance counselors from various cities in Alberta the opportunity to experience some of the physical training along with day-to-day soldiering, as well as opportunities to ask questions. Still, more could be done to educate parents and care givers who have influence over

¹² The Maple Leaf. A new program well-suited for women considering joining the Forces. Last accessed 1 February 2018 <https://ml-fd.caf-fac.ca/en/2017/08/5755>

¹³ Kim Smith. Canadian Armed Forces pushes for more women. Global News 5 January 2018. Last accessed 1 February 2018. <https://globalnews.ca/news/3923213/canadian-armed-forces-women-military/>

their children's future career choice. It only stands to reason that any parent would be reluctant to send their daughter into an organization that has sexual harassment and sexual assault in the media on a weekly/ monthly basis.

15. Justice Marie Deschamps' report that was released on the 27th March 2015 explicitly confirmed what everyone was ignoring for years.¹⁴ The CDS and senior leaders are educating all members of the CAF by implementing mandatory training to eradicate harmful behavior. The importance of eliminating inappropriate sexual conduct is critical if women are going to join the CAF. The statistics of eliminating harmful conduct are slowly improving and this is likely to equally affect recruiting efforts. The message of improving the CAF culture remains on point and the number one priority for the CDS and all members of the CAF. This needs to remain at the forefront until the culture in the CAF evolves. This will take time and those that do not comply are dealt with swiftly and often rightly result in severe career implications. Successfully eliminating sexual misconduct in the CAF is critical for increasing women's confidence that they are joining a reputable organization where they will feel safe in a harassment-free environment.

16. Finally, the manner in which the CAF portrays itself in promotional videos that leads to false expectations. CAF recruitment videos that are displayed in locations such as movie theatres show high speed activities that does not reflect reality. Newly trade qualified soldiers are arriving at their Unit expecting lots of career opportunities including deployments around the world only to find themselves waiting in some cases for years before their first deployment. A more holistic view of what a career in the CAF looks like. It would be difficult to portray the CAF in 30 to 60

¹⁴ Marie Deschamps. External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces. Canadian Armed Forces 27 March 2015. Last accessed 1 February 2018. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-support-services/external-review-sexual-mh-2015/summary.page>

seconds that gives a snap shot of basic training to retirement but it would be more realistic than the current media footage with the tag line, “Experience unique adventures, stimulating challenges, rewarding friendships and the chance to see and shape the world while serving your country.”¹⁵ It is a welcome change to see that over 50% of the soldiers, sailors, airwomen and men are now reflected in current recruitment videos.¹⁶ If expectations are set realistically a newly trained woman would understand that a military lifestyle while unique in comparison to any other profession in Canada can offer a predictable and stable life.

17. The Fredericton, New Brunswick recruitment detachment provided some key insights into their success with attracting female recruits. Of the four recruiters, two are women. They seek to educate potential women candidates about life in the CAF, while providing anecdotal and relatable personal experiences. However, not all recruitment centres employ women as recruiters, and at least one women should be posted to each recruitment centre as a minimum. Recruitment staff play a critical role in working with potential recruits to select a trade and environment that best suits individual interests.

18. In my personal experience, along with the first and second-hand accounts there are numerous cases where individual’s signup in a trade that does not suit them, but they are joining to receive immediate employment. New recruits should have to wait for their ideal career choice that is based on aptitude testing along with the job profile matching their individual interests. This would assist in eliminating job dissatisfaction as switching to a different career once employed by the military can take time leading to further dissatisfaction and potential release. By

¹⁵ Government of Canada. National security and defence. Last accessed 1 February 2018.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/campaigns/in-demand-jobs.html>

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

joining trades that women are excited about pursuing, provides better chances for long-term success and retention in the CAF.

CONCLUSION

19. Implementing measures required to make the CAF a employer of choice for women entering the work force is not an easy task. The Canadian population's opinion of women in the military range from not an option to welcoming the challenge. At present, the current recruitment rates of women have stagnated: new and innovative initiatives are necessary to meet the SSE target.¹⁷ The few programs and initiatives highlighted here should be expanded across the country. Moreover, addressing concerns about the sexual misconduct issues that is being addressed by the CAF senior leadership needs to continue for lasting cultural change, and to reassure potential recruits.

20. There should be consideration to include at least one women in all recruitment centres to address women being able to speak directly to another woman. The recruitment centres also need to continue actively engaging the public and responding to questions from women or their parents/ care givers. Recruitment staff could play a pivotal role in developing activities that occurs on Regular force bases or Reserve force armouries, giving interested parties an opportunity to experience the CAF *without* signing a contract. These are only some of the kind of initiatives that are necessary for recruiting women in the CAF and achieving SSE's goal of 25% women in the CAF by 2026.

¹⁷ Strong, Secure, and Engaged Canada's Defence Policy. 2017, 22.

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