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FROM 15 TO 25 PERCENT – INCREASING WOMEN RECRUITING AND RETENTION IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

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AND RETENTION IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

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AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to identify ways that the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) can increase women recruiting and, especially, retain them within the organisation. These recommendations are aimed to Director General Military Personnel and associated team to be viewed in a holistic fashion and integrate them into the current and upcoming initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

2. “Experience unique adventures, stimulating challenges, rewarding friendships and the chance to see and shape the world while serving your country.”¹ Is the first sentence you see when you get to the recruiting website followed with various pictures depicting the advantages of joining the CAF. Since 1989, all the occupations within the organisation are, by law, accessible to women. In 1988, just before this change in policy, women represented 10% of the population, a percentage that has evolved to around 15% today,² representing an approximate 0,17% average annual progression.

¹ Government of Canada, Canadian Armed Forces, “In demand jobs”, last accessed 29 January 2018, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/campaigns/in-demand-jobs.html?utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=GC%2FDND-MDN%20-%20ADV%201718-0048-IT-02%20-%20Search%20-%20EN&utm_term=canadian%20armed%20forces&utm_content=Brand%20-%20Canadian%20Armed%20Forces.

² Jungwee Park, "A Profile of the Canadian Forces." *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 20, no. 3 (2008): 39-52.

3. Having a significant women population in the security environment has been demonstrated to be critical to success through various research, culminating with United Nation Resolution 1325 that was adopted on 31 October 2000. It emphasized that gender has a significant impact on how humans live through conflict and that security forces that are attempting to bring peace to a region would do well to train and compose their forces to support this finding.³ Following this resolution and subsequent ones, the Canadian Standing Senate Committee on Human rights stated in its report that: “The CF and RCMP should set clear objectives to increase the proportion of female personnel in international deployments to twenty percent by 2015”⁴ and also develop a plan to have women in senior leadership positions within a defined time period.⁵

4. Within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), there has also been a push to increase gender diversity within the alliance in order to better enable operations and reflect the wishes of the participating nations. In its 2015 report on Gender perspective within NATO, the average percentage of women within the alliance was at 10.8 percent and Canada was the eight highest country in that regard.⁶ This report does recommend that the NATO nations take additional steps to make their forces more attractive for women, but it is understandably limited on details accounting for the wide variety of policies and cultures within the alliance.⁷

³ United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1325*, (New York: UN, 2000), 2-3.

⁴ Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, Women, peace and security: *Canada Moves Forward to Increase Women's Engagement*, (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 2010), xii.

⁵ Ibid, xii.

⁶ NATO Committee on Gender Perspective, *Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations*, (Brussels: NATO Graphics and Printing, 2016), 9-10.

⁷ Ibid, 33.

5. In order to address these issues, “Strong, Secure, Engaged” (SSE) the latest Government of Canada defence policy directs the CAF to reach 25% of women in the organisation by 2027, representing an increase of one percent per year over 10 years.⁸ This is a little below six times the annualized increase the CAF has seen over the past 30 years. This is a challenge that requires the consideration of methods we have shied from using in the past in the how we recruit and retain women within the CAF.

DISCUSSION

6. This service paper will first identify what is currently being considered to achieve an increase in women recruiting and then provide some supplementary avenues of approach in order to achieve the required six-fold increase in women recruiting and ensure retention once they are in the system. These avenues will mostly be along financial benefits as it is an avenue that has had success to solve other recruiting/retention issues in the past and has not been implemented when it comes to gender.⁹

7. The Privy Council Office (PCO) has already received a study on the matter in 2017 that came up with recommendations along the axes of administering with a view to identify gender appropriately, ensure gender neutrality of the CAF employment terminology and complete further research to understand what work and what does not, a “try-before-you-buy” approach if

⁸ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged, Canada's Defence Policy*, (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 2017), 23.

⁹ Director Personnel Generation requirement, “5671-27(DPGR 4-2-2) Amendment – Military Occupation List – Incentives and Allowances”, 30 Aug 2017.

you will.¹⁰ It acknowledges the fact that little is actually understood within the organisation about what makes women want to join and stay within the Profession of Arms and that furthering this understanding is critical to achieving lasting results and meet the objective of 25% women in the CAF by 2027. Further results are to be available within the next few months and could educate further changes into military human resources policies.¹¹

8. There is, however, research outside the Government of Canada agencies that has been conducted in order to better understand the situation. As part of her PhD requirements in 2011, Dr Gouliquer, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Laurentian University, researched both quantitatively and qualitatively the life of women in the Canadian Armed Forces. Among her findings, there is one that gets no recognition within the organisation and it is the fact that, even factoring standard human capital variables (education, years of service, training, etc), women end up being paid less than men, even more so in the case of officers.¹² This difference, estimated at \$1261 for officers and \$445 for Non-Commissioned Members (NCM) can be explained, according to her statistical analysis, by the following when looking at advancement opportunity in the CAF for women: “1) there is discrimination against women in access to these experiences; 2) family obligations limits women’s mobility more than is the case for men; 3) or, it could be some combination of the two.”¹³

¹⁰ Privy Council Office, Behavioral insights project: Increasing recruitment of Women into the Canadian Armed Forces, (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 2017), 7.

¹¹ Ibid, 8.

¹² Lynne Gouliquer, “Soldiering in the Canadian Forces: How and Why Gender counts!”, (Doctorate Thesis, McGill University, 2011), 130.

¹³ Ibid, 133.

9. These findings align with the ‘sexualised culture’ issues that OPERATION HONOUR does set to resolve as not all gendered issues within the CAF are acts of an abusive nature. Since it is cultural, it does seep into all that members of the profession do and, therefore, would logically affect women access to career boosting opportunities.

10. Currently, CBI 205.525 exists as an allowance to increase recruiting in stressed trade, namely, below 95% manning level. Since it has been determined that the CAF is at only 60% of the required number of women within the force, it does seem to demonstrate that a logic similar to that policy could be applied to this case. Moreover, the demonstration that women are paid less than men does also support investigating such a policy. It would likely bring its own set of issues, not the least would be that 85% of the CAF is currently male and would likely need to be brought on board and to an understanding of the rationale for such a program. However, 0.17% per year is not an acceptable rate of growth of the female population within the CAF, especially considering the objectives given by the Government of Canada and the need for operational effectiveness in a gendered peace and security environment.

11. On the subject of communication, the subject of ‘sexualised culture’ is also currently very prevalent in the media at this current juncture, especially when it comes to the “#MeToo” movement and others like it.¹⁴ The CAF may have positioned itself ahead of the curve as OPERATION HONOUR does give the organisation credibility in its ability to prosecute

¹⁴ Aaron Wherry, “What happens when #MeToo comes to Parliament hill”, CBC News, last updated 19:50 EST 25 January 2018, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/brown-hehr-me-too-analysis-wherry-1.4503839>.

unacceptable behaviour. However, by itself, it does not guarantee that women will see themselves more within the organisation, so, maintaining the aim continues to be critical to the organisation.

12. It is especially important that the CAF targets its recruiting and retention messages to the millennial demographics who will, in the next decade, become the prevalent group within the organisation. Civilian industry has been heavily investing in the understanding of the millennials desires from their workplace, especially when it comes to Millennials women in non-traditional environments.

13. Literature on the millennials expectations in the work environment is widely available. An analysis of the various 'Pop Culture truths' concerning this group was conducted in 2010 and confirmed that Millennials, in general, did expect their work to provide them with, good but realistic pay, rapid advancement, work that provides satisfaction and a work environment that cares about them.¹⁵

14. Another research was conducted by PwC in 2015, a worldwide leader in professional assurance, tax and other services, to offer its client a better understanding of their future employees. Some of the key findings are that 53% of millennial women are looking for career

¹⁵ Eddy S. W. Ng, Linda Schweitzer, and Sean T. Lyons. "New Generation, Great Expectations: A Field Study of the Millennial Generation." *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25, no. 2 (2010): 282-283.

progression and 52% are looking for competitive financial benefits in an employer.¹⁶ 43% of the same group would move on based on finding work that pays better.¹⁷ Their recommendations to both hire and then retain Millennials were the following: “Promote talent over tenure, Keep your technology up to date, Let them know how they are doing – often, Be transparent, Give them visible female role models and embrace efficiency.”¹⁸

15. The Anita Borg Institute, a group that promote women in the tech industry, conducted a survey in 2016 and discovered that flexibility in both the number of hours work and the possibility to work at least partially from home made a significant difference in both the hiring and the retention of women in technology related fields¹⁹ that are very similar to a variety of the trades present in the CAF.

16. The themes employed on the CAF recruiting pages are reflective of these priorities for millennials and, of the adults identifiable on the main page, 57% of them on the date consulted were women, clearly demonstrating our interest in that demographic.²⁰ However, none of the actual information concerning financial benefits is easily explained and understood within the main page. As an example, the information for pay is three clicks from the main page and offers

¹⁶ Courtney L. Vien, *Millennial Women: How to Woo a New Generation of Employees*. Vol. 220. New York: American Institute of CPA's, 2015, 28.

¹⁷ Ibid, 27.

¹⁸ Ibid, 29.

¹⁹ Anita Borg Institute Issues Data-Driven Insights into what Sets Apart Companies that Lead in Hiring, Retaining Women Technologists." *Targeted News Service*, 2016. 1.

²⁰ Government of Canada, Canadian Armed Forces, “In demand jobs”, last accessed 29 January 2018, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/campaigns/in-demand-jobs.html?utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=GC%2FDND-MDN%20-%20ADV%201718-0048-IT-02%20-%20Search%20-%20EN&utm_term=canadian%20armed%20forces&utm_content=Brand%20-%20Canadian%20Armed%20Forces.

the information broken down by terms that would not make much sense to a civilian wanting to join. Basic scenarios, or even better, a small questionnaire that would allow the women wanting to join to understand what benefits they would have access to by joining the forces would go a long way of simplifying the terminology on these pages. Moreover, the recruiting page does not really cover or explain themes such as the merit-based system of progression in ranks which would likely appeal to Millennial women.

17. To ensure retention, it is also necessary to look at advancement of women within the system. As stated above, visible female senior leaders are a key component to recruit within the desired demographics and to achieve the increased operational effectiveness in peace and security operations. To achieve this, and until there is a better balance of genders at the higher echelons, it would be sensible to consider positive discrimination towards women when it comes to promotions and succession planning to a higher degree than what has been done in the past, since past results are not sufficient to reach the desired 2027 objective.

CONCLUSION

18. To summarize, the CAF has been mandated to increase the number of women by one percent per year for the next 10 years. It is not only the right thing to do considering the current opinion of society, but it is also necessary to ensure operational effectiveness in today's and tomorrow's complex peace and security environment. There is currently a discrepancy between our stated objectives and the results the CAF has obtained in increasing its women percentage

over the past 30 years where an average increase of only 0.17% was achieved annually. The image of the CAF is changing, especially in the wake of OPERATION HONOUR, but there is still a lot of work to be done on that front. Women Millennials are the demographics to target and they seek rapid advancement, competitive compensation and female leaders and the CAF environment has to reflect these desires if change is to occur on a sustainable basis.

RECOMMENDATION

19. It is recommended that Director General Military personnel investigate implementation strategies for the following recommendations:

- a. Develop and implement a recruiting allowance like the ones expressed in CBI 205.525 until the desired end state for women recruiting is achieved;
- b. Develop policies to increase positive discrimination for women with both promotion and succession planning;
- c. Consider flexible hours and work from home programs where it could be applicable; and
- d. Improve on the communication strategy, both externally for recruiting and internally for retention, of the development of these policies and their success in making the CAF an employer of choice for women.

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