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## STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

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SERVICE PAPER - ÉTUDE MILITAIRE

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# **STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES**

For The Chief of Military Personnel (CMP)

## **AIM**

1. Militaries are generally viewed as hyper masculine environments that do not lend themselves to the recruitment of women. In 2016, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) adopted a policy to increase the percentage of women in the military by one percent annually from the current 15% to 25% by 2026.<sup>1</sup> While the implementation of the policy is on course, the aim of this service paper is to examine the impediments to the realization of CAF's goal of increasing its percentage of women to 25%, with a view to recommending possible solutions.

## **INTRODUCTION**

2. The recruitment and retention of women remains a challenge for militaries around the world, with a variety of techniques employed to attract and retain them. Internationally, the clamour for the inclusion of women in peace and security has its roots in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.<sup>2</sup> The resolution promotes the "rights of women to participate in peace and security institutions, processes and decision-making structures."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in

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<sup>1</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence: Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy, Ottawa: DND, 2016, 12.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) [on women and peace and security]. Accessed online on 29 January 2018. <http://www.un-documents.net/sr1325.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325...

democracies such as Canada, every citizen has a responsibility and right to shoulder a fair share of civic duties, including the obligation to bear arms in defence of their country.

3. In 1989, Canada's Human Rights Commission Tribunal gave the CAF a decade to enact complete gender integration into all positions.<sup>4</sup> Pursuant, all positions were officially opened to women in 2000 when Canada's Navy lifted the restriction against women serving on submarines.<sup>5</sup> At the core of the aspiration to increase the recruitment of women is the need to make the CAF reflective of Canadian society's diversity and values. In September 2016, an audit conducted by the Canadian Office of the Auditor General to examine initiatives enacted by the CAF to increase recruitment of women established that "while some efforts were made to attract women, no special recruiting program was developed for that purpose." The Auditor General was of the view that without a more concerted effort to attract women to occupations where they are under-represented, the CAF will remain significantly short of its 25% employment equity goal."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the CAF is dogged by a public perception that its culture is male dominated with an underlying sexualized aspect, a cultural barrier that can be best addressed by recruiting and retaining more women and promoting them to senior positions.

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<sup>4</sup> A. King, (2013). Women in combat. The RUSI Journal, (158)1, 4–11. Accessed online on 29 January 2018. <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B6M2PyTn7gabYnBmQmlIVzlqaDQ/edit>.

<sup>5</sup> Canada. Office of the Auditor General of Canada. (2016). Report 5 Canadian Armed Forces recruitment and retention National Defence. Accessed online on 29 January 2018. [http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl\\_oag\\_201611\\_05\\_e\\_41834.html](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201611_05_e_41834.html).

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

4. This paper will review the challenges the CAF faces in recruitment and retention of women and the strategies adopted to address those challenges. It will compare Canada's strategies with those of Australia and Norway, whose military forces face similar logistical and cultural challenges to gender integration as Canada. It will then identify the existing policy gaps and recommend possible interventions.

## **DISCUSSION**

5. While society has generally embraced women in traditional male roles in many sectors of the workplace, the military continues to lag behind in terms of attracting and retaining women.<sup>7</sup> Despite expanded freedoms and rights, the role of women in the military continues to be perceived by most through the lens of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination within and outside the CAF. Given the costs of training qualified individuals, retention is a key element of military human resource management. In this regard, it matters to examine what factors impede the recruitment of women into the military.

### **Occupational Impediments and Hindrances**

6. One major impediment is the social stereotype that continues to project the image of the military as a physically demanding and largely masculine organization.<sup>8</sup> Physical strength has for

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<sup>7</sup> Capt David G. Smith and Judith E. Rosenstein, *Gender and the Military Profession: Early Career Influences, Attitudes, and Intentions*. Vol 43, Issue 2, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> E. M. Archer, (2013). The power of gendered stereotypes in the US Marine Corps. *Armed Forces & Society*, 39, 359–391. Boyce, L. A. & Herd, A. M. (2003) *The Relationship Between Gender Role Stereotypes and*

a long time been the prime determinant of military prowess. The Falklands war, where British soldiers had to walk over 60 kilometres with full combat gear, demonstrates the significance of physical fitness. Although the development of long-range and high-tech weapons has made this characteristic less relevant in a practical sense, it still remains important. But is physical strength any different among men and women? A CAF survey conducted to assess the impact of morphological aspects (height, weight, and body composition) and physical fitness (grip strength, shuttle run time, and plank time, etc) on performance showed that total performance on the CAF physical fitness test is dependent on physical fitness rather than morphology. In this survey, physical ability was established to be dependent on trainable factors of physical fitness like aerobic capacity and muscular strength, while morphological characteristics had little to no implication on performance.<sup>9</sup> Given the fact that physical fitness can be attained through training regardless of individual morphology, gendered role assignment ignores the unique potential of every individual and has often been used as a vehicle for discrimination with no scientific basis.

7. Another obstacle to the continued recruitment of women into today's military work environment is the perceived threat, often bona fide, of sexual exploitation and abuse. Sexual harassment of women in the workplace is widely acknowledged as a persistent problem.<sup>10</sup> More recently on 23 January, 2018, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the World Economic

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Requisite Military Leadership Characteristics, Sex Roles, 49(7/8), pp. 365-378.

<sup>9</sup> Christian Hans Tingelstad, Daniel Theoret, Michael Spicovck, and Francois Haman. "Explaining Performance on Military Tasks in the Canadian Armed Forces: The Importance of Morphological and Physical Fitness Characteristics." *Military medicine* 181, no. 11-12 (2016).

<sup>10</sup> G. T. Cantisano, Dominguez, J. F. M., & Depolo, M. (2008). Perceived sexual harassment at work: Meta-analysis and structural model of antecedents and consequences. *Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 11, 207-218.

Sagawa, S., & Campbell, N. (1992). *Sexual harassment of women in the military (Women in the Military Issue Paper)*. Washington, DC: National Women's Law Center. Welsh, S. (2000). The multidimensional nature of sexual harassment: An empirical analysis of women's sexual harassment complaints. *Violence Against Women*, 6, 118-141.

Forum in Davos gave a passionate defence of gender and social equality. The PM acknowledged that “Sexual harassment ... in business and in government, is a systemic problem and ... unacceptable.”<sup>11</sup> The speech is a testament to the barriers women continue to face not just in the military but in almost all sectors.

8. Davis, in a 1997 article, *Understanding Women’s Exit from the Canadian Forces*, provides a retired Sea King Navigator’s perspective that further explains why some women opt to leave. She alludes to the fact that failure to address the existing obstacles makes them systemic, and states that:

The final decision to leave was not based on a single incident of harassment, but was the result of ongoing discrimination associated with administrative and psychological isolation, and workplace perceptions surrounding maternity, family status, and gender roles. Women chose to leave when the organizational environment became a continuous source of stress which significantly compromised their quality of life.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Justin Trudeau, Speech, World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland, 23 January 2018.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

## Occupational Enablers

9. In order to address retention, it is important to also establish what makes enlisted women stay. In a survey conducted in the US to establish the reasons why some women make a long-term career commitment in the security sector, some of the reasons given were: pride in what we do, agency tradition and respect for it, and camaraderie and options to work in uniform or plain clothes.<sup>13</sup> In comparison, in a CAF commissioned survey, the most commonly cited factors contributing to respondents' decision to stay were job satisfaction, the need for job security/financial security, satisfaction with pay, pension and benefits, organizational identification, and limited opportunities elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> Other aspects include changes to postings, organizational efficiency, advancement and promotion, workload and work demands and geographic stability.<sup>15</sup>

## Existing Strategies

10. In 1995, the Canadian Employment Equity Act whose purpose is “to achieve equality in the workplace” was passed. The Act aims to correct the discrimination of women, aboriginal persons, the disabled and visible minority groups. Subsequently, the CAF Employment Equity Regulations were formulated in 2002 to give effect to the Act. Further, the CAF has created the

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<sup>13</sup> Denise Powell, Recruiting Women into Law Enforcement, WomenPolice, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Canada. 2016 CAF Retention Survey: Qualitative Analysis. Ottawa: Human Resource Systems Group Ltd, 30 March 2017, iv.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*



Defence Employment Equity Advisory Groups (DEEAG) that “provide advice and insight to the leadership on the implementation of employment equity”.<sup>16</sup>

11. Another policy initiative is Operation Honour, a promotion, prevention and policy tool designed to eliminate sexual misconduct in the CAF.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the CAF has established the Defence Diversity Council and an Advisory Committee on Gender Integration and Diversity, with diversity-training programs to sensitize the chain of command. There are also efforts to ensure that procured equipment is suited for a mixed gender force including the functionality and practicality of women’s uniforms.<sup>18</sup> Another major development is the formulation of “The Journey,” a human resource management policy tailored to balance individual and service needs with attention to career advancement, individual development and family welfare.<sup>19</sup>

12. In 2016/17, the CAF also implemented a number of recruitment strategies such as the establishment of priority processing and enrolment to women; creation of a reenergized marketing strategy with an assigned line of advertising for women including a women’s employment opportunity program tailored to inform and educate women about the benefits of a

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<sup>16</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence Canadian Forces Employment Equity Report 2011–2012. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

<sup>17</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence (2003a) Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada Ottawa: Government of Canada.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen J. Thorn, “CAF needs to be more diverse, says General” in Legion, Canada’s Military History Magazine, June 19, 2017.

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

CAF career; and, allowing female officers released from CAF in the past five years to return to military service.<sup>20</sup>

13. Retention strategies within CAF are tailored to afford women flexibility for service throughout their careers and include: flexible paternal leave of up to 35 weeks, that may be extended to 109 weeks in the event that it is not taken within a calendar year due to the exigencies of operations;<sup>21</sup> and, child care programmes where Military Family Resource Centres in CAF bases/wings offer regular and emergency childcare to military parents.

### **Policy Gaps in the Recruitment and Retention of Women in the CAF**

14. Despite the good intentions and measures taken so far, the recruitment and retention of women continues to be plagued by many challenges. For that reason, future leaders in the CAF will need to address some pertinent questions such as: how long pregnant women can continue working; mitigation of the impact of prolonged maternity leave on career progression; management of dual service marriages especially where both partners are in combat arms trades or one is in the corporate world; the management of married couples in the same unit and how such individuals should be employed or deployed; how to handle overseas postings considering children and career progression more so for single parents; and whether women's career advancement should be impacted by inability to accept postings for long tours away from their

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<sup>20</sup> Meg Trucano, Rebekah Myers, Allyson Corbo, Amanda Hare and Rachel Gaddes, Foreign Military Strategies to Recruit and Retain Women: Response to DACOWITS RFI 3 Quarterly Business Meeting, March 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Canada. (2016, January 26). EI - Extended parental benefit period for military families [Webpage]. Accessed online 29 January 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-military-families.html>.

family.<sup>22</sup> It is also noted that currently, CAF only compensates animal care for operational deployments, excluding courses and routine travel requirements.

15. The importance of these challenges is the need to regularly review and enhance policy framework governing the work environment. As the rate of recruitment of men also starts to wane due to shifting social dynamics, the quest to enroll more women into the military could prove to be an even steeper uphill battle. As Jude argues, “Women are already five-times harder and more expensive to recruit because very few women want to join the military.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Comparisons with Australia and Norway**

16. How does the CAF compare with other militaries? In 2011, the Australian Defence Forces (ADF) removed all restrictions for women serving in combat roles.<sup>24</sup> Like Canada, the ADF aims to increase the recruitment and retention of women in an effort to “better reflect . . . the Australian society.”<sup>25</sup> The recruitment strategies adopted by the ADF are environment centric, with the Air Force, Navy and Army each adopting their own approach.

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<sup>22</sup> Canada. Department of National Defence, Canadian Armed Forces, Backgrounder, Women in the Canadian Armed Forces, 7 March 2017. Accessed online 29 January 2018.

<http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=women-in-the-canadian-armed-forces/izkjzqeu>.

<sup>23</sup> Jude Eden, “The Many Problems with Coed Marine Boot Camp,” *Lifetzette*, (Washington, DC: 2016). Accessed online 29 January 2018. <http://www.life.zette.com>.

<sup>24</sup> Women in the Australian military (n.d.). In Wikipedia. Accessed online 29 January 2018.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_the\\_Australian\\_military](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Australian_military)

<sup>25</sup> Australia. Department of Defence, Defence People Group. (2014). Defence diversity and inclusion strategy: 2012-2017 (p. 14). Accessed online 29 January 2018.

[http://www.defence.gov.au/diversity/\\_Master/docs/strategy/DDIS-12-17.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/diversity/_Master/docs/strategy/DDIS-12-17.pdf)

17. Some of the strategies adopted by the Australian Air Force include: creation of the Women in the Air Force online marketing campaign called “Do What You Love”;<sup>26</sup> implementation of the “Graduate Pilot Scheme,” which aims to recruit female pilots from those actively pursuing careers as civilian pilots and pursuing a bachelor’s degree in aviation from local universities; and experiential camps for women aged 16-24, offering hands-on experience of available employment opportunities. For its part, the Australian Army has implemented the “Recruit to Area” initiative, which allows recruits to specify a particular location for their first posting; and established the Army Pre-Conditioning Course designed to assist female recruits in meeting entry-level fitness requirements. The Australian Navy has also opened all Navy positions to women; established the “Women in the Navy” webpage,<sup>27</sup> which profiles currently serving female members and emphasizes non-traditional roles and job categories; expanded the Gap Year Programme, which allows recruits to explore naval careers before committing; and, reduced the initial minimum period of service for selected labour categories.

18. The ADF has also formulated a number of retention strategies such as: monitoring satisfaction with the recruitment process, career management and career satisfaction; increased mentorship opportunities; making it easier for members to take and return from mid-career breaks; increasing promotion opportunities by providing leadership development courses; increasing female representation on promotion boards; offering female career advancement

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<sup>26</sup> Royal Australian Air Force. (2015, March 23). Do what you love [Video file]. Accessed online 29 January 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1K2drnXpaY&index=1&list=PL61C99821F7EAE410>

<sup>27</sup> Women in the Navy. Accessed online 29 January 2018. <http://www.defencejobs.gov.au/navy/aboutthe-navy/women-in-the-navy/>

mentorship opportunities; and addressing cultural barriers that may impede female representation in leadership roles.<sup>28</sup>

19. In the case of Norway, women are allowed to serve in all combat positions, including in submarines since 1985. Interestingly, Norway has also implemented some unique strategies to retain women such as unisex lodging where each dorm houses two women and four men. The move serves to normalise interactions between men and women and has been linked to a reduction in the incidents of sexual harassment on bases with unisex dorms compared with bases where dorms were segregated; formulation of all-female training programs; and employing women in the highest levels of Norwegian military leadership.<sup>29</sup> Norway's recruitment however is by conscription and does not favourably compare with the CAF circumstances.<sup>30</sup>

## CONCLUSION

20. In terms of the percentage of women and the areas in which they can serve, Canada is a world leader. Even based on the comparisons drawn from its peers, Australia and Norway, the

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<sup>28</sup> Australia. Department of Defence, Defence People Group. (2016). Women in the ADF report: 2015–2016. Accessed online 29 January 2018. <http://www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/15-16/Downloads/Women-in-ADF-Report-2015-16-online-only.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup> A. Mulrine, (2013, January 25). 8 other nations that send women to combat. National Geographic. Accessed online 29 January 2018. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/13/130125-women-combat-world-australia-israel-canada-norway/>

<sup>30</sup> The country with compulsory military service for women (2016, August 29). News.com.au. Retrieved from <http://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/the-country-with-compulsory-military-service-for-women/news-story/8a49c417f0c41d7c4d7c17fb22b002fa>. Norway. (2013, March 10). Norwegian Ministry of Defense. Accessed online 29 January 2018. <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/the-government/previous-governments/ministries-and-offices/government-secretariats-and-ministries-s/ministries-since-1814/ministry-of-defence/id426227/>

CAF are recognized as being a step ahead in military gender integration among its allies.<sup>31</sup> While society has opened many avenues and equal opportunities for women, they still face many barriers, mostly rooted in the social stereotypes and perceptions of sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, based on prevailing social trends, women will in the long-term continue to join the workforce more by necessity than choice, with many women likely to commit to long-term careers. Unfortunately for the CAF, the trends in society have translated to less desire by young men and women alike to seek a career in the profession of arms as more alluring opportunities beckon. The CAF will therefore be required to tap into this expanded role of women in society to meet its recruitment goals. The onus is on the CAF leadership to ensure a conducive and safe environment for women underpinned by tolerance and acceptance. In this quest, vigilance is necessary to ensure continued removal of barriers to women entering and staying in the CAF.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

21. While greater opportunities have been opened up for women, they continue to face numerous barriers in their full integration into the CAF. The following measures could therefore help promote the recruitment and retention of women in the CAF:

- a. Adoption of flexible career management policies and supporting resources for military service couples. The continued promotion of the geographic stability for dual-military families is important to take care of concerns such as childcare, vacant houses

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<sup>31</sup> Winslow Donna and Jason Dunn. "Women in the Canadian Forces: Between legal and social integration." *Current Sociology* 50, no. 5 (2002): 641-667.

for childless single personnel and couples who go away simultaneously as well as animal care.

b. Sustained promotions of a positive culture change such as the continued implementation of Operation Honour among other measures. Culture change is a protracted process and until it is fully realized, interim visible measures must be sustained to address concerns of any victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. This should go hand-in-hand with continued allocation of requisite resources.

c. Targeted recruitment remains an option and whereas feminist theorists agree that women can do just about anything men can do, such a proposition is too idealistic.<sup>32</sup> Getting women into roles they can comfortably fulfill is key to enhancing their numbers, which should see an expansion of the domains in which they can be deployed over time. Blanket recruitment can only lead to less job satisfaction and continued exodus. Diversity must be accompanied by suitability to serve, with individuals meeting the standards and demonstrating the desire to serve.

d. Improving the visibility of women in the CAF including leadership at the top is key.<sup>33</sup> Role models and mentors should also be assigned to newly recruited women to fuel their ambitions. Quality female leadership throughout the ranks will breed quality

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<sup>32</sup> Susan L Gray, "Discontinuing the Canadian Military's 'Special Selection' Process for Staff College and Moving Toward a Viable and Ethical Integration of Women into the Senior Officer Corps." *Journal of Military Ethics*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 284-301, 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Capt Lindsay L. Rodman "BTTF 5: Retaining Female Talent Marine Corps Gazette Quantico, VA: 13 October 2013. Accessed online 29 January 2018. <https://www.mca-marines.org>.

female accession, retention and career progression and become a living testimony to other women that it is possible.<sup>34</sup>

e. Qualitative and quantitative research to determine the participation, treatment, experiences and performance of women in the CAF should continue at regular intervals in order to assess the challenges women continue to face and the impact of remedial actions. Analysis based on empirical data will allow for formulation of effective context-specific gender mainstreaming policies.

22. It is hoped that the above measures and others that may be formulated in the course of time will help boost the recruitment and retention of women into CAF while embracing the diversity and values of the Canadian society.

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<sup>34</sup> Lynn M Stow, Recruiting Enlisted Women, Marine Corps Gazette; Mar 2017; 101, 3; ProQuest pg. 31. Basow, S. A., Howe, K. G. (1980). Role-model influence: Effects of sex and sex-role attitude in college students. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 4, 558–572.



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