





Potential Impediments and Solutions to Increasing Female Representation in the Canadian Armed Forces

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POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENTS AND SOLUTIONS TO INCREASING FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

AIM

1. The aim of this paper is to highlight the potential impediments and solutions to increasing the percentage of women in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) to 25%. This goal is achievable, and it must be met for the CAF to demonstrate that it is an equal opportunity employer.

INTRODUCTION

2. For nearly five decades, Canadian lawmakers have appreciated the need to "ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society." However, notwithstanding this legislation, it has become abundantly clear that gender neutrality continues to elude the CAF as institutionalized stereotypes dictate that male soldiers, sailors, and aircrew are the norm. To remedy this, an increased female representation in the CAF became a central tenet of *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy (SSE)*. This direction was issued under the aegis of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which urges member states "to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict."

¹Privy Council Office, Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (Ottawa: PCO Canada, 1970), ix.

²Paula Trachy, "Women, Citizens and Soldiers: The Gender Integration of the Canadian Forces" (master's thesis, McMaster University, 2001), ii.

³Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 23.

⁴United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 1325* (New York: UN, 2000), 2.

3. While the CAF's current female composition of 15% is higher than the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) average of 11%, there remains noticeable room for improvement as Canada's military strives to reflect the diversity of the citizens it defends. In order to increase this figure even further, the CAF must first focus on preventing it from diminishing; that is, the recruitment of more women into the CAF hinges, to a large extent, on the retention of current servicewomen. Military training is a costly endeavour in terms of both time and financial resources, and early attrition prevents the CAF from receiving an adequate return on its investment. Unlike most civilian industries, mid-level and senior leaders cannot be simply hired into the CAF; it takes years of indoctrination and institutional experience to be a strong and seasoned member of the profession of arms. As a result, SSE properly recognizes that "it is imperative that [the CAF] protect [its] investment in the expertise and knowledge of [its] people." Accordingly, this paper will focus on both retention and recruitment efforts to illustrate how female representation in the CAF can be increased to 25%. Once potential impediments have been identified and discussed, recommendations for overcoming them will be provided.

DISCUSSION

4. The subject matter discussed herein is not exclusive to women; much of it applies equally to men. Furthermore, it is admittedly generalized in scope and the recommendations are not panaceas for the problem. Nevertheless, this paper offers a starting point for the discourse on increasing the retention and recruitment of women in the CAF. This is accomplished by addressing the need for increased safety in the workplace, an expansion of strong female role

⁵DND, Strong, Secure, Engaged . . ., 21, 23.

⁶Office of the Auditor General of Canada, May 2006 – A Status Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons (Ottawa: PWGSC, 2006), 65.

⁷DND, Strong, Secure, Engaged . . ., 21.

models, and greater work-life balance, which is attained in part through improved flexibility and stability.

Safety in the Workplace

- 5. First and foremost, it should come as no surprise that women rightfully expect to work in an environment in which they are free from harassment, abuse, and unwanted sexual advances. While the CAF aims to provide a safe and respectful workplace for all of its members, it has been well documented that women are more susceptible to mistreatment than men. This reality is encapsulated in former Supreme Court Justice Madame (Mme) Marie Deschamps' finding that "there is an underlying sexualized culture in the CAF that is hostile to women . . . and conducive to more serious incidents of sexual harassment and assault." Such behaviour is incongruent with the CAF's expected values of integrity, loyalty, courage, stewardship, and excellence, enough erodes morale, and serves as a strong impediment to both retention and recruitment efforts, particularly in the female cadre.
- 6. When the organizational imperative of providing safety in the workplace was studied in the Swedish Armed Forces, it was found that sexual harassment has a "negative effect on women's job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work group effectiveness and a similar negative effect on their psychological and physical health." For this reason, the eradication of harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour (HISB) has become a top priority of

⁸Marie Deschamps, External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2015), i.

⁹Department of National Defence, *CDS Op Order – Op HONOUR* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2015), 2; Department of National Defence, *Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces Code of Values and Ethics* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2012), 10-11.

¹⁰Armando X. Estrada and Anders W. Berggren, "Sexual Harassment and its Impact for Women Officers and Cadets in the Swedish Armed Forces," *Military Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2009): 166.

the Minister of National Defence (MND).¹¹ Starting with the Chief of the Defence Staff's (CDS) full-throated denunciation of HISB, the CAF has been committed to achieving the MND's objective through the continual enforcement of OP HONOUR.

7. Yet despite concerted efforts to eliminate it, HISB persists. Even more concerning is the fact that individuals who should be setting the strongest examples of expected behaviour have been accused of misconduct themselves. As a recent illustration, two charges of sexual assault were levied in October 2017 against a senior officer who, by all accounts, should epitomize the CAF's ethical principles. While it is promising that alleged victims have come forward, and although it is imperative to bear in mind that the accused is entitled to the presumption of innocence until proven guilty in a court of law, charges of this nature send a clear message that the CAF is not yet an institution in which women can reasonably expect to evade workplace harassment. Until the conclusions reached by Mme Deschamps are fully addressed and sexual misconduct is halted entirely, the retention and recruitment of women will continue to be an arduous undertaking.

Strong Female Role Models

8. Many individuals are drawn to and retained by organizations because of their influential members, and the profession of arms is no exception. However, finding strong female role models at the upper echelons of the CAF is increasingly difficult since the percentage of Regular Force women decreases steadily at each rank level: Captain 18.1%, Major 14.5%, Lieutenant-

¹¹Office of the Prime Minister of Canada, "Minister of National Defence Mandate Letter," last modified 12 November 2015, https://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-national-defence-mandate-letter.

¹²David Pugliese, "Canadian Forces academy's director of professional development faces two sexual assault charges," *National Post*, 30 October 2017.

Colonel 8.8%, Colonel 4.2%, and General Officers 4.1%; Master-Corporal 15.3%, Sergeant 14.9%, Warrant Officer 9.7%, Master Warrant Officer 7.6%, and Chief Warrant Officer 5.3%. ¹³ While women can certainly gain inspiration from male role models, it is "only with greater representation of women at the higher levels [that] other women will believe those ranks are attainable." ¹⁴ Therefore, high-ranking women are paramount to the promotion of the broader retention and recruitment efforts, and their disproportionately small sample size is a major hindrance to the realization of a CAF comprising 25% women.

9. Notwithstanding the dismal statistics, an increase in the quantity of senior servicewomen will not achieve the desired effects unilaterally. Rather, in addition to their mere existence, influential female CAF members must actively engage with junior members and potential recruits. The importance of this concept is reinforced by a United States Naval Academy (USNA) study that found that "increasing the visibility and access to women, especially those with children, for all young women could increase the influence these role models have on women's career trajectories." Since the CAF is in direct competition with myriad other organizations to attract the best and brightest employees, it behooves the institution to put its strongest female role models on display.

¹³Department of National Defence, *Canadian Forces Employment Equity Report 2011-2012* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2012), Annex B, Schedule 6. This report represents the most recent data that was readily available to the author. 'General Officers' refers to the combination of Brigadier-Generals, Major-Generals, Lieutenant-Generals, and Generals.

 ¹⁴T.H. Maurice, "Stopping the Talent Drain: Setting the Conditions for Female Retention in the Canadian Armed Forces" (Joint Command and Staff Program Directed Research Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2017), 70.
 ¹⁵David G. Smith and Judith E. Rosenstein, "Gender and the Military Profession: Early Career Influences, Attitudes, and Intentions," *Armed Forces & Society* 43, no. 2 (2016): 275.

Work-Life Balance

10. A principal source of dissatisfaction amongst women in the CAF is the inability to achieve an acceptable work-life balance. While it is comparatively simple for men to have both a fulfilling career and a rewarding personal life, it has been found that "servicewomen, especially those who are mothers, must invent new ways of juggling the institutions of the military and the family." It is therefore not surprising that the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) concluded that, to a far a greater extent than men, women value the non-pecuniary aspects of a job that allow them to strike a healthy equilibrium between their professional and familial obligations. In particular and by necessity, women tend to covet flexibility and stability. ¹⁷

Flexibility

11. In the modern era, it is increasingly common for both members of a marriage or common-law partnership to be employed on a full-time basis. A study of dual-career couples who have successfully managed competing demands revealed that "flexible scheduling emerged as the most salient work factor contributing to [work-life] balance." Recognizing this reality, many civilian corporations have instituted policies that embrace flexibility by permitting employees to complete certain tasks from home in the early morning hours, during the evening,

¹⁶Lynne Gouliquer, "Soldiering in the Canadian Forces: How and Why Gender Counts!" (master's thesis, McGill University, 2011), 273.

¹⁷Matthew Wiswall and Basit Zafar, *Preferences for the Workplace, Human Capital, and Gender* (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2016), 34. "The NBER is a private, non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to conducting economic research and to disseminating research findings among academics, public policy makers, and business professionals." National Bureau of Economic Research, "About the NBER," last modified 4 February 2018, http://www.nber.org/info.html.

¹⁸"Scheduling flexibility describes the degree to which participants structured their time devoted to work, rather than having scheduling practices explicitly endorsed by company policies." Shelley A. Haddock *et al*, "Practices of Dual Earner Couples Successfully Balancing Work and Family," *Journal of Family and Economic Issues* 27, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 217.

or over the weekend. 19 By the same token, it has become increasingly common for civilian industries to allow employees to work entirely from home as a result of the advent of tele- and video-conferencing.

12. For nearly two decades, Canadian federal public servants have been afforded the opportunity to fulfil all or part of their duties via telework, and the policy governing this right openly acknowledges that "flexibility in the workplace to accommodate work, personal and family needs can result in [numerous] benefits to organizations."20 However, by and large, the CAF still does not espouse the concept of flexible scheduling, and it is a serious impediment to the job satisfaction of serving members and the ability to recruit new personnel. For example, owing to the practice of strict adherence to a rigid schedule, which seems rather archaic when juxtaposed with the modernity embraced by many of the CAF's civilian and governmental counterparts, members of the profession of arms often struggle to deliver their children to a childcare facility or school in the morning and collect them in the afternoon. Since the "workfamily system continues to operate according to mid-20th-century assumptions about men as primary wage earners and women as primary domestic caretakers,"²¹ it is predominantly the female population of the CAF that feels the effects of institutionalized scheduling inflexibility.

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²⁰Government of Canada, "Telework Policy," last modified 9 December 1999, https://www.tbs-

sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12559.

21Karyn Loscocco and Sharon R. Bird, "Gendered Paths: Why Women Lag Behind Men in Small Business Success," Work and Occupations 39, no. 2 (2012): 186.

Stability

- 13. A study conducted by the Royal Air Force (RAF) highlighted 'family stability' as one of the most influential factors on retention. ²² Similarly, domestic exit surveys have indicated that the leading motivators to depart the CAF have been "the effect of members' postings on their ability to maintain a family, . . . their children's education and the opportunity to settle down in a certain area, [and] the feeling that the community in which they live is home." ²³ These results reveal that stability is highly valued by respondents. Although the exit survey was used to gauge the prevailing sentiments of both male and female members, women are more likely to leave the CAF to seek a more stable environment in which to raise their children. ²⁴
- 14. To an increasingly large percentage of the workforce, "family and social life is sacred."²⁵ It must be acknowledged that it is substantially more difficult to maintain either to a satisfactory degree when faced with the perennial prospect of being uprooted. This reality resonates particularly strongly amongst CAF members since a routine posting can translate into a family being relocated thousands of kilometers away due to the vastness of the nation. Focusing on women, several studies have concluded that those who opt to remain with their current employer do so primarily because their job fits well into their life;²⁶ that is, women who have established a

²²K.J. Haysman, *Attitude Patterns of Royal Air Force Personnel in Relation to Retention* (London: Her Britannic Majesty's Stationery Office, 2000), 122.

²⁵Dawn Johansen, "Military Recruitment and Retention Strategies: United Kingdom", in *Recruiting and Retention of Military Personnel* (Neuilly-sur-Seine: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2007), 2G-5.

²³Department of National Defence, *Annual Report on Regular Force Attrition 2010/2011* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2012), 61. This survey represents the most recent data that was readily available to the author.

²⁴T.M. Brown, "Changing the Unchangeable – Recruitment and Retention of Women in the Canadian Military" (Joint Command and Staff Program Solo Flight Paper, Canadian Forces College, 2015), 9.

²⁶Cathleen Clerkin, *What Women Want – And Why You Want Women – In the Workplace* (Greensboro: Center for Creative Leadership, 2017), 11; Marian N. Ruderman and Patricia J. Ohlott, "What Women Leaders Want," *Leader to Leader* 2004, no. 31 (Winter 2004): 42; Katelynn Wiggins and Angel Brownawell, "Work-Life Fit and Enjoying What They Do Top the List of Reasons Why Employees Stay On the Job, new APA Survey Finds", *American Psychological Association* (blog), 28 August 2012, http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2012/08/work-life.aspx.

way of life in a given geographic region actively seek a career that accommodates continued enjoyment of said lifestyle. Hallmarked by frequent changes of venue, a long career in the CAF, under its current structure, represents the antithesis of this concept.

CONCLUSION

- 15. The days in which a male-dominated CAF is acceptable are over; greater female representation is long overdue. Like many of the undertakings outlined in *SSE*, increasing the percentage of women in the CAF to 25% is ambitious, but it is deliberately so.²⁷ In order to achieve this goal, shifts in paradigms relating to both retention and recruitment must occur, and the former must precede the latter. It is only through the retention of highly capable servicewomen that potential recruits will recognize that the CAF offers women safety in the workplace, strong female role models, and a reasonable work-life balance through flexibility and stability. However, for the time being, these three concepts represent serious impediments that must be overcome.
- 16. Although specifically selected to advance female retention and recruitment efforts, the issues discussed herein transcend genders and are, for the most part, equally applicable to male CAF members. Therefore, despite the advocacy for more women in the CAF, this paper does not suggest that females should be afforded special treatment based solely on their gender. To do so could inadvertently serve as a form of reverse discrimination, which would counteract the objectives of *SSE* and undermine the premise of this paper. Rather, meritocracy must continue to prevail, and the CAF should take measured steps to level the playing field.

²⁷DND, Strong, Secure, Engaged . . ., 11.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 17. The mission of ensuring safety in the workplace cannot fail. As such, the CAF must remain steadfast in its effort to eradicate HISB through OP HONOUR. Since the CAF is constantly in the public eye, every effort must be made to demonstrate openly that the institution takes the problem seriously. This can be achieved via more frequent press conferences designed to convey progress, greater support for victims, and swifter and harsher penalties for those found guilty of such crimes. In addition to internally demonstrating that HISB will not be tolerated, the public must be made aware that those who deem it acceptable to harass coworkers have no place in the CAF. In doing so, the Canadian profession of arms will become a more appealing place to work for serving members and potential recruits alike.
- 18. There are many strong women in the CAF, and each of them has the ability to serve as a powerful retention and recruitment tool. As such, the existing female population within the organizational hierarchy must be sagely leveraged. Servicewomen should be afforded ample opportunity to interact directly with subordinate members on matters of importance to females, visit schools and youth organizations, and attend special functions that allow them to effectively promote the profession of arms. Granted, some females will be more inclined to pursue such endeavours than others, but all should be encouraged to actively engage in events that they find particularly interesting. Seeing is believing, and influential women in the CAF must be seen for others to believe a military career is a viable alternative.
- 19. For the CAF to be the employer of choice, it must address the demand for a more realistic work-life balance. Where possible, alternate work arrangements such as flexible scheduling and

the option to telecommute should be offered. While the unique nature of military service precludes *all* CAF personnel from taking advantage of such arrangements, many individuals employed in headquarters are well-positioned to benefit from a policy that focuses primarily on results rather than process. Similarly, the CAF must explore options to increase stability for its members. Longer posting cycles and the strategic avoidance of unnecessary transfers would not only contribute to achieving this objective but also be fiscally responsible given the high costs associated with frequent relocations. While it must be accepted that many postings are inevitable and a refusal to move may have a negative impact on one's career, a more amenable policy based on deliberate longer-term planning will greatly enhance job satisfaction and therefore contribute to achieving the goal of increasing the percentage of women in the CAF to 25%.

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