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ELIMINATION OF THE REGULAR OFFICER TRAINING PLAN

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SERVICE PAPER - ÉTUDE MILITAIRE

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ELIMINATION OF THE REGULAR OFFICER TRAINING PLAN

AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to demonstrate the necessity for a systemic change in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) officer recruitment and training philosophy. Specifically this paper will argue that the current construct of the Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) must adapt to generational and institutional requirements. Through a comparison against Allied officer training institutions, and changing societal expectations, this paper will provide recommendations for significant reform of the CAF junior officer training and development construct. The following will provide recommendations for organisational changes, but comprehensive implementation and budgeting strategies are outside the scope of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

2. The ROTP provides young Canadians the opportunity to obtain both an Officer's commission in the CAF and an undergraduate degree. Candidates who are accepted at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMCC) or at another Canadian university are enrolled in the CAF as officer-cadets.¹ The mission of RMCC is to produce officers with the mental, ethical, physical, and linguistic capabilities required to lead with distinction in the CAF.² Recently, the fall 2017 Auditor General of Canada Report found that RMCC was not meeting its stated mission or role. It found that RMCC emphasized academic education over military training and

¹ Canada: Royal Military College, "Regular Officer Training Plan," retrieved 29 January 2018, <https://www.rmcc-cmrc.ca/en/registrars-office/regular-officer-training-plan-rotp>.

² *Ibid.*

that there were deficiencies in the military training. It also found that there was no measurable standard for leadership qualities or ethical military behaviour that graduates were required to demonstrate. These findings matter as almost all Canadian universities can offer an undergraduate education to future officers, yet only RMCC has the stated focus on leadership and ethics training.³

3. This paper will compare the Canadian ROTP against equivalent officer training programmes at the British Army's Royal Military Academy (RMA) Sandhurst, and the Australian Royal Military College – Duntroon (RMC-D). It will then draw on societal studies and industry strategies to submit a generationally relevant officer training concept. These recommendations will be specifically tailored to create institutional efficiencies, while delegating undergraduate educational responsibilities to Canadian universities, and focusing on creating measurably better military leaders.

DISCUSSION

Training Institution Comparisons

4. The Canadian ROTP stands alone in its emphasis on educational bursaries as compared to comparable Allied nations. RMA Sandhurst is the British Army's basic officer training institution. Over 90% of attending cadets possess a university degree upon selection for training and undergo a 44-week course to develop character, intellect, and professional skills. Training is

³ Canada: 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada. Report 6-Royal Military College of Canada-National Defence,6.9, retrieved 29 January 2018, http://www.oagbvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201711_06_e_42671.html#hd4a.

divided into three distinct terms that progressively focus on: basic military skills and decision making, leadership skills with an academic component, and practical leadership application in demanding training exercises. Upon graduation from the programme, the newly commissioned officers join their branches for trade-specific training as appropriate. A specialized ‘professionally qualified officer’ course is eight weeks in duration for medical officers and other specialized professionals.⁴ RMA Sandhurst prioritizes military leadership training with the assumption that cadets possess academic proficiency upon arrival. Although it is an Army centric training institution, RMA Sandhurst standardizes leadership norms and professional military expectations.

5. In another direction, RMC-D is the Australian Army’s primary officer training institution. Acceptance into the programme is not contingent on possession of an undergraduate degree. Although the Canadian officer standards aspire to create an undergraduate educated officer corps, the Australian military emphasizes military competence. RMC-D is an 18 month military training and leadership course that is divided into three distinct six-month modules. Similar to RMA Sandhurst, all officers train in a balance of military skills, leadership, and academic disciplines directly relatable to military requirements. Similar to RMA Sandhurst, RMC-D also provides an abbreviated 45-day military leadership course for select professionally qualified officers.⁵ The Australian military is unique in its approach to officer training by also offering the tri-service Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFD) that offers a three-year

⁴ United Kingdom: Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, retrieved 29 January 2018, <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/our-schools-and-colleges/rma-sandhurst/>.

⁵ Australia: Royal Military College – Duntroon, retrieved 30 January 2018, <https://www.army.gov.au/taxonomy/term/132>.

undergraduate degree in conjunction with military training to select cadets.⁶ The ADFD is academically accredited through a partnership with the University of New South Wales rather than creating a defence funded university, reducing academic overhead and civilian management. The Australian Defence Force has built inherent flexibility through a multi-faceted approach to officer training. RMC-D ensures that its officer corps is leadership focused and that expectations and norms are standardized.

6. The review of the British and Australian institutions demonstrates different approaches that should be considered within the Canadian context. When contrasting RMCC's objectives, costs, and output against equivalent institutions in the United Kingdom and Australia, Canada has a significant shortcoming in its academic approach to military and leadership training. The recent Special Staff Assistance Visit (SSAV) to RMCC showed that time management emphasized academics, as officer cadets spent an average of: 30 to 53 hours per week on academics, nine hours on physical fitness, 6.5 hours on military training, and four hours on second language study, where required.⁷ While RMCC is the primary metric for ROTP training standards, many officer-cadets attend civilian institutions where there is even less supervision and emphasis on military development. Despite a lack of focus on any specific military training, RMCC was double the cost as compared to a student attending a similar small civilian university. Canada has an outstanding array of undergraduate institutions, yet approximately two-thirds of

⁶ Australia: Department of Defence, Australian Defence Force Academy, retrieved 29 January 2018, <http://www.defence.gov.au/ADFA/About/Program.asp> .

⁷ Canada: Special Staff Assistance Visit Report: on the *Climate, Training Environment, Culture and Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) Programme at the Royal Military College of Canada*—Kingston, 2017.

RMCC expenditure is tied to academic overhead (see figure 1), without any direct correlation to professional military development.

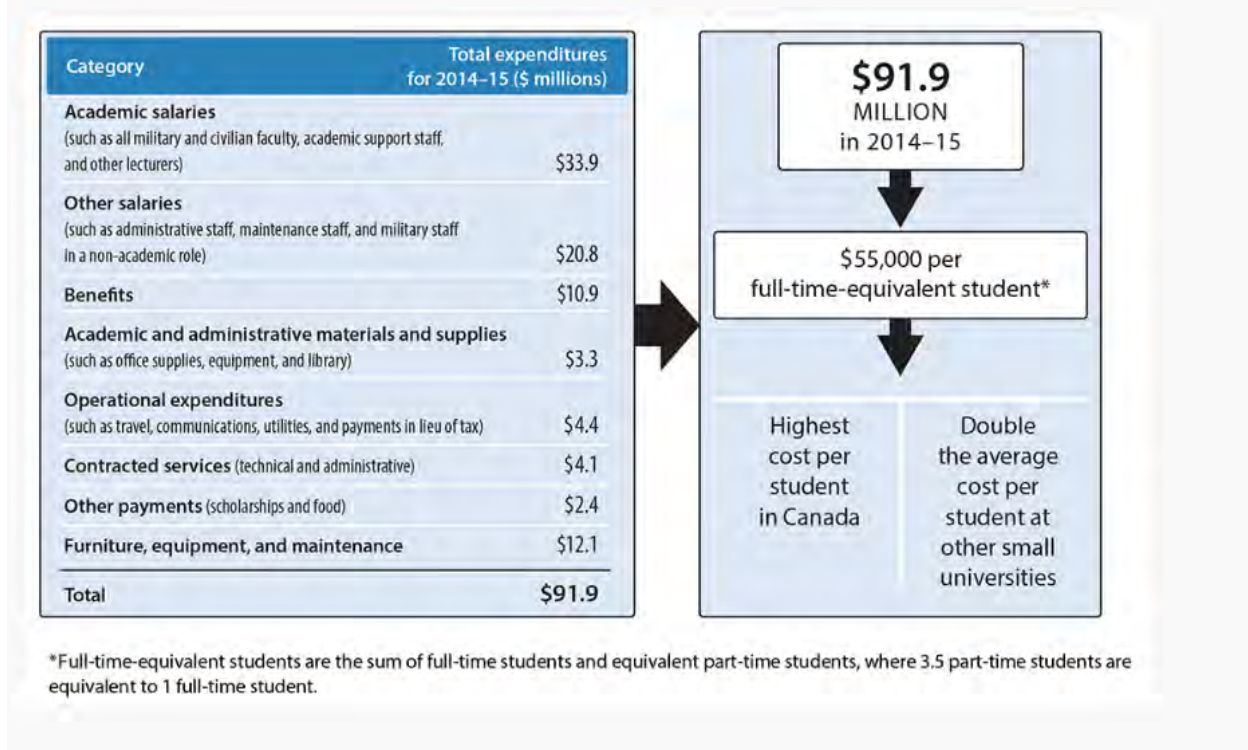


Figure 1 – RMCC Cost per Student

Source: 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada. Report 6—Royal Military College of Canada—National Defence, Exhibit 6.3.

7. Based on the conclusions of the Auditor General’s Report, it is significant that National Defence could not show any correlation of superior military performance from ROTP officers as compared to any other entry plan.⁸ In its current construct, it is difficult to make a direct link between ROTP and military career success, despite a costly four-year full-time training

⁸ 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada Report 6—Royal Military College of Canada—National Defence, 6.55, retrieved 29 January 2018, http://www.oagbvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201711_06_e_42671.html#hd4a.

programme.⁹ RMCC boasts high quality undergraduate academic programmes, but the expense per student is out of proportion with the lack of military leadership and ethics training. Beyond this, RMCC graduates are viewed as having equivalent academic proficiency to all officers entering the CAF as Direct Entry Officers (DEO). In comparison, DEOs enter the CAF with a previously earned university degree at no cost to the CAF. The implication is that a DEO has equal potential in the CAF yet creates an average cost-savings of \$400,000, as compared to the average gross cost to create a RMCC graduate, and nearly \$240,000 per ROTP graduate of a civilian university (See Figure 2).

Officer entry plan	Cost to National Defence
Regular Officer Training Plan at the Royal Military College of Canada	\$100,822 x 4 years = \$403,288
Regular Officer Training Plan at civilian universities	\$59,732 x 4 years (maximum) = \$238,928
Continuing Education Officer Training Plan—Air Environmental Affiliated Degree at Seneca College	\$100,144 x 2.5 years = \$250,360
Direct Entry Officer Plan	\$0 x 0 years = \$0 *
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> * Since Direct Entry Officer Plan recruits obtained a university degree before enrolling, National Defence did not incur any costs for their education. </div>	

Source: Based on unaudited data from National Defence

Figure 2 – Cost Comparison

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.58.

Source: 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to the Parliament of Canada. Report 6—Royal Military College of Canada—National Defence, Exhibit 6.4.

8. ROTP does not prepare officers for service in the CAF or a unit. Despite the programme length at four-five years, very few junior military officer qualifications or professional military education (PME) courses are completed during the ROTP. ROTP officer cadets must travel to a myriad of third-locations for military training during and after university, while their academic training responsibilities rarely overlap with PME requirements. The Basic Military Officer Qualification is the responsibility of the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School (CFLRS) at St-Jean Quebec, while most PME qualifications are considered a unit responsibility at later stages of the officer's career. Element specific training is conducted at yet other third-locations, divided by trade. In the case of some technical trades, specialized training may continue for years after commissioning with no guarantee of successful employment. While it is evident that specialized training must occur at certain schools and units, there is no explanation as to why PME, like the Army Junior Staff Officer (AJSO) Course, and the CAF Junior Officer Development (CAFJOD), become a unit's responsibility given the four-year duration of the ROTP programme. It is also not evident why the CAF is willing to invest in a fully-subsidized education with no guarantee of successful service.

Societal and Generational Considerations in Officer Training

9. Generational human-development concepts and evolving societal norms must be taken into account when recruiting high-school graduates into an officer training programme like the ROTP. Medical research suggests that the understanding of adolescence is evolving.

Adolescence encompasses elements of biological growth and major social role transitions. Earlier puberty has accelerated the onset of adolescence in nearly all populations, while understanding of continued growth has lifted its endpoint age well into the 20s. Rather than regarding adolescence as age 10–19 years, a definition of 10–24 years corresponds more closely to adolescent growth understandings of this life phase.¹⁰ In the case of military enrollment in the ROTP at 18 years, the member will develop a new cognitive perception of their surroundings during undergraduate studies and will continue to reassess these perceptions throughout their obligatory service period. It is likely in many cases that the individual’s reasoning for engagement in military service at 18 years will no longer hold relevance by the early and mid-20s. The ROTP inherently implies a medium-term commitment of nearly ten-years. In this context, a CAF educational investment in a ROTP candidate is high-cost with no guarantee of long-term commitment in the current generational context.

10. The ROTP is statistically headed toward obsolescence. Canada has outstanding undergraduate educational options that offer students a diverse and multi-faceted learning environment. Rather than replicate a military funded undergraduate programme, why not leverage Canada’s existing resources? Recent Canadian census data shows that Canadian society is becoming increasingly educated. Among 55-64 year olds, undergraduate degrees were found nationally among 20.3% of the population. This statistic rose with younger population segments, with 35.0% among 25-34 year olds.¹¹ In this well-educated society, perhaps RMCC should offer

¹⁰ Prof Susan M Sawyer, MD, Peter S Azzopardi, PhD, Dakshitha Wickremarathne, MDS, Prof George C Patton, MD. “The Age of Adolescence” in: *The Lancet: Child and Adolescent Health*. Published: 17 January 2018.

¹¹ Canada: Education Highlights Table, 2016 Census, retrieved 31 January 2018, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/hlt-fst/edu-sco/Table.cfm?Lang=E&T=11&Geo=00&SP=1&view=2&age=3&sex=1>.

limited specialized graduate degrees, retain a military research and development body, but dissolve its costly undergraduate programmes.

11. The attraction of the highly-educated ‘millennial’ generation into the CAF is an institutional necessity. Research demonstrates that millennials prefer career opportunities and challenging assignments over life-long employment paradigms.¹² In terms of management and evaluation, they expect to receive frequent feedback about their performance and an ability to influence departmental decisions. Time-efficient and challenging training is of particular importance to this generation. As employees, this generation is less bounded by strict vertical hierarchies, expecting that their input has value in certain circumstances to the whole team.¹³ Applied to the CAF context, millennials who do not have a strongly positive perception of their work environment statistically will only remain at an organisation for two years.¹⁴ The implication for the ROTP is that millennials who complete a 4-year degree and additional specialized training are likely already considering their next employment opportunity once they are qualified.

Optimized Officer Training Programme

12. The ROTP undergraduate education model is costly and inefficient when compared to the cost savings of recruiting DEOs. The findings in the 2017 Auditor General’s Report regarding RMCC, as well as the 2017 Chief of Defence Staff ordered SSAV, suggest that the current

¹² Gaye Ozcelik. “Engagement and Retention of the Millennial Generation in the Workplace through Internal Branding.” In: *International Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 10, No.3,(Feb. 2015), 4.2.1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.2.3.

¹⁴ M. Prokopeak. How to Retain Your Millennial Workers. *Workforce*, Vol. 92 Number 9. (2013).

RMCC focus on academics is not producing graduates with any discernable advantage in professional military or ethical training over DEOs. Financially, there is significant evidence that the abandonment of all CAF sponsored undergraduate programmes will result in substantial efficiencies without any measurable difference in the quality of junior officers entering the CAF. RMCC possesses academic purpose outside of the undergraduate programmes as a DND research and development institution and through a continued offering of graduate programmes in specialized fields of military importance. RMCC's current replication of civilian educational institutions is counter-productive in the undergraduate context. RMCC still has a role in junior-officer development if it adapts its role to a high-quality military leadership training programme and eliminates undergraduate educational programmes.

13. In the current officer enrollment construct, a two-tier paradigm exists between ROTP and DEO. Through the elimination of the ROTP, virtually all general service officer candidates would enroll with a degree. The enrolment of officer candidates who have already completed a degree would simplify the officer training progressions and allow a dedicated officer training course. In comparing institutional practices in the United Kingdom and Australia, RMCC's role as a leadership training institution could be revitalized into a full-time 6-18 month tri-service officer qualification course. RMCC Kingston and St-Jean campuses possess the infrastructure to immediately accommodate such training. By de-linking academic education from officer training, efficiencies can be created at a number of CAF training institutions. The BMOQ course at CFLRS could be eliminated and repurposed into the first segment of the updated RMCC course. Subsequent portions of the officer training course could include the completion of all relevant military professional development courses such as AJSO and CAFJOD, facilitating

improved integration upon arrival at a unit. A third segment of the course could pursue element-specific training prior to graduation. Completion of the updated RMCC course would still result in a posting to the appropriate branch for advanced training. All officers would be promoted upon graduation to the rank of second-lieutenant/acting sub-lieutenant, alleviating the challenge of diverging rank progressions to captain/lieutenant (Navy).

CONCLUSION

14. The CAF must continue to evaluate institutional assumptions and adapt to a rapidly changing society if it wishes to remain relevant. Canada's population is becoming increasingly educated as it boasts a growing network of high quality universities. The ROTP's high cost practice of hiring high-school graduates with the purpose of sponsoring their education towards a long-term career is no longer a generationally relevant construct. University graduates are increasingly abundant in Canada. Based on the millennial generation's perception of employment, some university graduates might be willing to attempt a military career as an officer, especially if they can evaluate it for a short period of three-five years. The ROTP construct based on long-term contracts and a 25 year career has little generational appeal. More importantly, the CAF's institutional goals, work satisfaction, and a perception of professionalism will increasingly become the determinants to select long-term service.

15. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the continued requirement for officer training institutions that emphasize leadership and military skills, delinked from the burdens of long-term

contracts and academic institutions. Firstly, this paper established models within select Allied countries that have similar officer development traditions to Canada, which have deemphasized military-led undergraduate training, by recruiting university graduates. Australia retains an undergraduate training system for select cadets, but this represents a limited capacity. Secondly, an analysis of current societal and social trends demonstrated that adolescence and development is encroaching into the mid-twenties. Coupled with a generational emphasis on short term employment, it was argued that the ROTP which emphasizes the recruitment of officer candidates upon graduation from high-school, is a high-cost and low-return investment given these social changes. Finally, the removal of the ROTP could constitute a realignment and elimination of the multi-tier recruitment process, while creating training efficiencies up to the rank of captain/lieutenant (Navy).

RECOMMENDATION

16. This paper recommends that the CDS order a review of the officer recruitment process. This is to consider the elimination of the ROTP as an entry plan into the CAF and realignment towards a DEO centred recruitment model for all general service officers. Based on available reports, the ROTP is costly, inefficient, and misaligned with evolving societal views of training and employment. Such a review should focus on the renewed use of RMCC as the CAF's officer training institution, free of undergraduate studies and focused on military officer and leadership training. The realignment of a common officer enrolment and training plan within the CAF would require amendments to administrative policies and compensation strategies for junior

officers. This should lead to an evaluation of additional recruiting incentives for officers with professional degrees.

17. It is recommended that the CAF develop a dedicated tri-service officer leadership course with duration of between 6-18 months at RMCC Kingston. Such a course could be divided into various periods of training that would individually focus on basic military skills, professional development, and some element-specific training. Leadership and ethics training should be a common thread throughout this training. Such a construct would create a unifying officer training experience within the CAF and would reset progression to the rank of Captain/Lieutenant (Navy). This type of officer-training institution should be specifically marketed and advertised as challenging and professionally rewarding leadership course for motivated individuals who already possess a degree.

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