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WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE ANYWAY? THE PROBLEMS WITH CANADA'S MULTI-DEPARTMENTAL APPROACH TO DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

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JCSP 45

Exercise Solo Flight

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By Lieutenant-Commander Adrian Armitage

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WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE ANYWAY? THE PROBLEMS WITH CANADA'S MULTI-DEPARTMENTAL APPROACH TO DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

INTRODUCTION

Defence procurement in Canada has been the subject of intense debate and controversy. This is understandable given the large dollar values usually associated with the acquisition of major defence products. During peacetime, it can be argued that procuring new capabilities and replacing ageing ones is the most complex task that the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) undertake.

The discourse on defence procurement spans multiple disciplines, taking various approaches to understanding what makes this type of procurement so unique and why it is fraught with challenges. Some would argue that the nature of defence products and the defence industry are to blame, while others approach the problem from a policy and security lens, some point to the politicization of the process as the greatest challenge.¹ This often leads to a general feeling that defence procurement systems are “broken” and in need of major overhaul. Library of Parliament Analyst, Martin Auger, comments on the defence procurement dilemma facing most countries:

...defence procurement systems have been unable to effectively respond to rising military demand or to avoid bureaucratic challenges, political influence, technological difficulties, cost overruns, and delays with the delivery of new weapon systems and military equipment.²

¹ Various Authors Contributions to *Emerging Strategies in Defense Acquisitions and Military Procurement*, ed. Kevin Burgess and Peter Antill (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017).

² Martin Auger, *Defence Procurement Organizations: A Global Comparison* (Library of Parliament of Canada: Ottawa, 2014) 7.

The increased demand for defence products and the changing operational landscape have created moving targets for contractors and procurement specialists.

If the view is that many defence procurement systems are broken, then the question then becomes one of what successful procurement means. Anessa Kimball questions if the criteria of effectiveness (products delivered meet the requirements), efficiency (on time and on budget), economical (low cost), diversified (multiple sources in the solution), and innovative (spin-off technology) can be considered as the basis for comparison for determining the best practice.³ She admits that there is an inherent implication of trade-offs between any of the factors within any system that seeks to apply a combination thereof as a measure of success. David Perry argues that it is unrealistic to expect that multi-billion dollar projects can navigate the complex project approval processes within government without some form of delay or problem. He argues that the goal should be, “a procurement system designed to reflect the inherent complexity of defence acquisitions.”⁴ These arguments serve to illustrate that even defining the problem is a complex undertaking.

Canadians are often exposed to delays in project delivery and cost overruns as the main issues surrounding defence procurement. Canada’s newest defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) notes that 70 percent of projects are not delivered within the planned timeline.⁵ However, there are greater concerns with a flawed procurement system such as, “eroded public confidence, delayed deliveries, cost overruns, litigation

³ Anessa Kimball, "What Canada could Learn from U.S. Defence Procurement: Issues, Best Practices and Recommendations," *SPP Research Papers* 8, no. 17 (April 2015): 6.

⁴ David Perry, *Putting The 'Armed' Back Into The Canadian Armed Forces: Improving Defence Procurement in Canada* (Ottawa: Macdonald-Laurier Institute, 2015), 4.

⁵ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, (National Defence: Ottawa, 2017), 74.

and reduced corporate profitability... The ultimate impact is on Canada's reputation as a place to do complex projects."⁶ With such dire consequences for failure, action must be taken in order to solve this problem.

This paper argues that defence procurement in Canada is challenged by the complex nature of this type of procurement, which is exacerbated by the competing priorities and diffusion of responsibility that result from the Government of Canada's multi-departmental approach. Although foreign approaches to defence procurement include centralization of responsibility, Canada continues to use a multi-departmental approach, even when appearing to consolidate authorities. This will be examined by looking at what makes defence procurement unique, the competing departmental priorities in procurement, and then discussing various options to address the challenges faced by the Canadian defence procurement system.

THE UNIQUE NATURE OF DEFENCE PROCUREMENT

Defence procurement is a unique subset of government acquisitions. It is driven by several strategic factors and must have a process that addresses, "a number of imponderables and unknowns such as future political and military alliances, the pace, effectiveness and impact of emerging technologies, the nature of future threats, and political will."⁷ The international security environment continues to rapidly change, thereby shifting the demands on armed forces at a pace much quicker than the

⁶ Doug Demptser, "Complex Project Management a Strategic Imperative." Vanguard Canada. Accessed 24 March 2019. <https://vanguardcanada.com/2014/07/09/complex-project-management-strategic-imperative/>.

⁷ John Louth, "Defence Acquisition Reform and the British Condition" Promises, Betrayal, and Resignation," in *Emerging Strategies in Defense Acquisitions and Military Procurement*, ed. Kevin Burgess and Peter Antill (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), 40.

procurement system can respond.⁸ Further, unlike many other industries, the defence sector tends to only have one customer: the government.⁹ Although not a monopoly, as there are many suppliers within the industry, the customer and supplier share a unique relationship. Since major procurements tend not to happen very often, there is a need for industry to maximize profit and life-cycle sustainability through service contracts. The intellectual property for defence contractors is the legacy that works to tie purchasers (governments) to a company in a long-term relationship. This ensures financial stability for the defence industry, while also providing the purchaser with a source of repair and support for unique and specialized systems.

The complexity in defence acquisitions has forced some countries to drastically reduce their domestic industrial capability and instead rely on foreign sales to support their armed forces.¹⁰ The risk this poses is that it reduces the sovereignty inherent in the production of one's own defence capabilities. The ability to build and maintain an armed force with limited reliance on other states is vital to maintaining an appropriate level of sovereignty and control over defence capabilities. One only needs to look to the recently cancelled sale of two *Mistral* class amphibious ships by France to Russia to see how quickly foreign military sales can sour based on political pressures.¹¹ Although Russia was repaid a great deal of the purchase cost due to the cancellation, they were left without the desired capability.

⁸ Ross Fetterly and Royal Military College of Canada- Graduate Studies and Research Division, "Arming Canada: Defence Procurement for the 21st Century," 2011, 228.

⁹ Tom Jenkins, *Canada First: Leveraging Defence Procurement through Key Industrial Capabilities* (Ottawa: PWGSC, 2013), 3.

¹⁰ Stephanie G Neuman, "Power, Influence, and Hierarchy: Defense Industries in a Unipolar World," *Defence and Peace Economics* 21, no. 1 (2010): 121.

¹¹ Stephanie Tavernise, "Canceling Deal for 2 Warship, France Agrees to Repay Russia," *New York Times*, August 5, 2015. Accessed on 6 April 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/06/world/europe/france-reimburses-russia-for-warships-as-deal-becomes-casualty-of-ukraine-sanctions.html>.

Defence procurement is unique in that it is driven by defence policy from the government that sets the vision for the roles of the armed forces. It is also through this policy that a government can:

...set the parameters of defence policy and establish procurement priorities, providing clarity to the public service and armed forces on the capabilities and specific MCPs [Major Crown Projects] the government of the day wants to see brought to fruition to achieve its defence policy goals.¹²

This results in a federal budget that allocates the appropriate funding in order for the military to carry out its mandate for operations and to sustain and recapitalize its capabilities and equipment. The current Canadian policy experience is shaped by the *Canada First Defence Strategy* (CFDS), a 20-year strategy published in 2008 under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) published in 2017 under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The overlap in time of these two policies is important as it highlights one of the challenges in defence procurement: the long-term nature of projects that span multiple electoral cycles. A robust defence policy grounded in the strategic realities of the state and international security environment should be able to transition across governments. However, it is argued that “Defence papers in Canada are designed not as *geostrategic* exercises but as *domestic political* exercises. They have only one primary purpose and that is to show just how different the new prime minister’s government is from the previous government.”¹³ This desire for change can manifest itself in budgetary changes, new project priorities, or even a freeze on current projects

¹² Jeffrey F. Collins and Carleton University- Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, "Executive (In)Decision? Explaining Delays in Canada’s Defence Procurement System, 2006-2015," 2017, 4.

¹³ Kim Nossal, *Charlie Foxtrot: Fixing Defence Procurement in Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2016), 106.

while the new government evaluates its options, thereby upsetting strategic planning for long-term acquisitions.

One of the greatest sources of controversy in Canadian procurement is the cost of defence acquisitions, and the seemingly endless parade of cost overruns and apparent poor budgeting. The unique contractor and customer relationship and specialized nature of defence goods explains some of the difficulty in projecting cost and schedule. The greater challenge is in the complexity of understanding just how much something actually costs and how to effectively allocate funds within a 20-year defence policy so that procurement remains affordable. In an effort to clarify the true costs of defence acquisitions, costs are now given for the lifecycle of the asset and its operations.¹⁴

Although rigorously costed, any defence policy is at the whim of external factors that can change the planned expenditure profile and impact the acquisition of capabilities; making accurate projections difficult at best. DND employs the Centre for Costing in Defence in an effort to account for “schedule slippage, foreign currency fluctuation, general inflation in the economy, design changes, and so on.”¹⁵ These estimates and the associated project contingencies combine to give the evaluation of what a project will cost. Added to these estimates is the use of accrual accounting, which allows for the amortization of expenditures over the life of a project. The end result is a confusing message for Canadians when they seek to understand how much an acquisition will cost.¹⁶ This is not unique to the public alone. The issue of initial and total costs also

¹⁴ Senate, Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, no. 1, Tuesday, 19 February 2019. Accessed 3 April 2019. <https://sencanada.ca/en/Content/SEN/Committee/421/nffn/54533-e>.

¹⁵ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Defence Investment Plan 2018* (National Defence: Ottawa, 2018), 14.

¹⁶ Senate, Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, no. 1, Tuesday, 19 February 2019.

creates stress for procurement officials and politicians when faced with changes as projects progress and more fidelity in cost is gained.¹⁷ If one of the factors to be used in assessing the success of the procurement system is adherence to budgetary constraints, then it is essential that the discussion of costs be more clearly articulated.

THE CANADIAN MULTI-DEPARTMENTAL APPROACH

The Canadian approach to defence procurement primarily involves three departments: DND, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), combined with the Treasury Board (TB) and Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) as the central agency.¹⁸ Each of these departments plays a different role in the procurement process that will be discussed in the next section. As TB functions as a central agency across all government endeavours, its role is not unique to defence procurement and therefore will not be examined in detail. Of note, given the dollars at stake, the TB has been known to be very thorough in its evaluation of DND programs.¹⁹ The mix of departments results in a diffusion of responsibility across staffs and Ministers, making it difficult to trace accountability for cost and schedule. On the subject of the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS), a question of who had responsibility for an issue was summed up by Senator Eric Forest as: “So everyone and no one.”²⁰

¹⁷ J. C. Stone, "A Separate Defence Procurement Agency: Will it Actually make a Difference?" *Strategic Studies Working Group Papers* (Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, 2012), 13.

¹⁸ Public Works and Government Services (PWGSC) is now known as Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) while Industry Canada (IC) is now known as Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED). The functions that each department carries out within defence procurement have not fundamentally changed in recent history and therefore the names may be used interchangeably as literature refers based on date of publication.

¹⁹ Philippe Lagassé, “Accountability for National Defence: Ministerial Responsibility, Military Command and Parliamentary Oversight,” IRPP Study No4. (March 2010), 53.

²⁰ Senate, Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, no. 1, Tuesday, 19 February 2019.

There are many varying opinions, priorities, and personnel trying to work together in order to successfully deliver the defence procurement program. Most closely linked together in the process are DND and PSPC. There is a unique relationship in which responsibility is ultimately shared for defence procurement:

[PSPC], for example, has overall responsibility for the development of the procurement plans, the solicitation and evaluation of bids, the contracting process, and the administration of contracts. DND has overall responsibility for, among other things, the definition of operational and technical requirements, the development of the procurement instruments (requisition), the inspection and selection of defence products, and post-delivery appraisals.²¹

Simply put, DND sets the requirements and PSPC acts as the contracting agency on behalf of the Government of Canada. This relationship seems very simple in theory, but in practice it is faced with challenges.

A number of the DND personnel working in procurement are uniformed CAF members. This is not unique to Canada, as observations of United States procurement offices reflect high numbers of military officers working in projects, “The most common explanation for this seems to be that the operational experience of the uniformed officer enables him or her to understand and respond to the needs of the operational user.”²²

This presents the challenge of integrating military members into the bureaucracy of government procurement. Alan Williams, a former Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel) (ADM(Mat)) summed it up well:

Working the system is an art. Civilians spend years learning how the systems work and cultivating the relationships necessary for

²¹ Martin Auger, *Defence Procurement Organizations...*, 2.

²² Keith F. Snider, “Defence Acquisition, Public Administration, and Pragmatism,” in *Emerging Strategies in Defense Acquisitions and Military Procurement*, ed. Kevin Burgess and Peter Antill (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), 188.

success. The military, for all of its strengths and capabilities is on unfamiliar territory with minimum experience in the area.²³

Reports from the Office of the Auditor General in both 1998 and 2004 also make reference to the general lack of experience that CAF personnel have in formal project management and in navigating the bureaucratic process of project approval.²⁴ Most often, CAF members struggle to communicate requirements such that decision makers can easily tie them to existing policies.²⁵ This is an essential part of the procurement process that has to be done correctly in order to avoid delays. Compounding the issue is the minimal time available for CAF personnel to learn and adjust to the field of procurement. As Dan Ross, a former ADM(Mat) noted, the steep learning curve is cut short by a posting cycle that moves CAF members back to operational posts or to other areas within the strategic headquarters.²⁶ This results in a lack of continuity and corporate knowledge as well as a revolving door of CAF members who, in the words of Larry Murray, “can’t spell ‘Treasury Board’ when they get here....”²⁷

With differing reporting chains and loyalties come differing priorities and responsibilities. Historically, a level of mistrust exists between the two departments. This stems from two main issues: that defence is “gold plating” their requirements to get more capability than it really needs; and that requirements and specifications are written to

²³ Alan S. Williams, *Reinventing Canadian Defence Procurement: A View from the Inside*. (Queen's University and McGill-Queen's University Press: Kingston, 2006), 87.

²⁴ Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada. *Chapter 3: National Defence – Upgrading the CF-18 Fighter Aircraft*. (Government of Canada: Ottawa, 2004), 15.

²⁵ Canada, Department of National Defence, Independent Review Panel for Defence Acquisition, *Independent Review Panel for Defence Acquisition Annual Report 2016-2017* (Government of Canada: Ottawa, 2017), 7.

²⁶ Robert Beaudoin, “Growing expertise: DND’s Project Management Challenge,” Vanguard Canada, August 2009. Accessed 30 March 2019. <https://vanguardcanada.com/2009/08/01/growing-expertise-dnds-project-management-challenge/>.

²⁷ Senate, Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, no. 1, Tuesday, 19 February 2019.

steer the procurement to a preferred platform or system.²⁸ These two practices run in opposition to the principles of fair competition and responsible use of public funds, thereby putting the two departments at odds.

Further complicating the defence procurement landscape in Canada is the Deputy Minister's Governance Committee (DMGC). Established in 2014 as part of the *Defence Procurement Strategy* (DPS) under Prime Minister Harper, the committee is designed to coordinate the DPS.²⁹ Although it appears the DMGC is a more centralized agency that provides a greater focus for defence procurement, this is not the case. In effect, the DMGC brought in Deputy Ministers from Foreign Affairs Trade and Development Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans, thereby adding to the already muddled defence procurement team.³⁰ Admittedly, the DMGC and associated Working Group of Ministers, was designed to "ensure shared accountability in defence procurements."³¹ However, with shared accountability comes more competing priorities and further diffusion of responsibility.

COMPETING PRIORITIES

When the unique nature of defence procurement is combined with multiple ministers across departments, the number of decision makers and inputs increases the potential for delay. Delays equate to a loss in buying power as market forces and inflation start to move costs, while the allocated budget remains stationary. The confusion between priorities for procurement starts with government defence policies. The CFDS opens with a statement from Prime Minister Harper highlighting that, "we are providing Canadian

²⁸ Dave Perry, *Putting The 'Armed' Back Into The Canadian Armed Forces...*, 11.

²⁹ Martin Auger, *Defence Procurement Organizations...*, 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

industry the opportunity to more effectively meet defence procurement requirements, and to position themselves for global excellence.”³² This is followed by a statement from the Minister of National Defence that further emphasizes the economic and job creation aspects of the CFDS.³³ Pessimistically, some argue that the whole purpose of defence procurement is not actually national defence, but economic stimulus and benefit as, “virtually every major defence acquisition is not taken for military and strategic reasons, but for economic reasons.”³⁴ Although it is expected that the primary goal of procurement programs should be acquiring capability for the CAF, the reality is that “while defence may wish to maximize defence capability with limited resources, the government is not going to allow them to spend billions of taxpayer’s dollars without some economic benefit to Canada.”³⁵ The investment serves to support sovereignty in the defence industry such that this valuable resource is available when needed. Patrick Finn, the current ADM(Mat), made this point succinctly to the Senate, “Having industry in Canada that can maintain these highly complex military systems is actually part of the defence of Canada.”³⁶ It is not this strategic goal that causes conflict, but rather the practical application of the overarching policies of the departments involved. For example, in an attempt to increase accountability, principals across the defence acquisition team implemented new procedures that increased reporting requirements by 50 percent.³⁷ This was without a substantial increase in staffing numbers or training for those individuals

³² Canada, Department of National Defence. *Canada First Defence Strategy*. (National Defence: Ottawa, 2008), 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ Kim Nossal, *Charlie Foxtrot...*, 70.

³⁵ J. C. Stone, "A Separate Defence Procurement Agency"... , 9.

³⁶ Senate, Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, *Proceedings of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance*, no. 78, Tuesday, 30 October 2018. Accessed 3 April 2019. <https://sencanada.ca/en/content/sen/Committee/421/nffn/78cv-e>.

³⁷ Dave Perry, *Putting The ‘Armed’ Back Into The Canadian Armed Forces...*, 7.

managing projects. The multi-departmental procurement process has become such that the Minister of National Defence makes comment in his opening section of SSE, stating that “Cumbersome decision-making and approval processes have introduced undue delays. Accountability among departments has been diffuse and at times unclear.”³⁸ This is indicative of the challenge that can arise when the fundamental mandates of departments meet head on.

Public Service and Procurement Canada

PSPC is the lead contracting agency for the Government of Canada. Although working jointly with DND, the roles are clearly differentiated. The goal of PSPC is to pursue efficiency and ensure integrity in contracting by overseeing fair and transparent competitive procurement processes.³⁹ Given the large number of international trade agreements regarding arms and defence material and domestic trade policies, it is essential to have expertise in how to navigate this space.⁴⁰ Although the open and competitive approach is well suited for traditional procurement where there are many contractors available, with defence this is not always the case. As Collins argues, “in defence procurement there are only a handful of major defence contractors in the world. A generic competitive model makes sense when buying photocopiers, but less so for multi-billion dollar defence equipment.”⁴¹ Although numerous procurement strategies exist within defence, including Foreign Military Sales (FMS) or rapid purchases under an Urgent Operational Requirement (UOR), the PSPC default position is to conduct a competitive process. In a limited defence supply environment with rapidly changing

³⁸ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged...*, 74.

³⁹ Alan S. Williams, *Reinventing Canadian Defence Procurement...*, 74.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-21.

⁴¹ Jeffrey F. Collins "Executive (In)Decision?," ..., 231.

technology, the time spent on a full competition can hamper the speed of procurement which can cause a reduction in the capability available for the budgeted amount.

DND and CAF

The PSPC approach can come into conflict with the CAF, which prizes the acquisition of the best equipment possible over all other concerns. In fact, there is a diversion of viewpoints towards procurement in general, in that the military “view their responsibility to protect Canada and Canadians with great pride and emotion. They rightly consider their role to be vital...”⁴² This creates a cultural divergence between those in the CAF who “belong to a hierarchical organisation where acceptance of tasks, instructions and obedience to orders is the norm and where the rank structure pervades all.”⁴³ While in the case of PSPC, “For the civil servant, bureaucracy has meant a fairly rigid adherence to rules, policies and processes.”⁴⁴ The emotion CAF officers can attach to procurement can overshadow their understanding of the role of PSPC to ensure confidence in the fairness of the contracting process. The public servant can spend an entire career performing the same type of work, gaining valuable experience. For the CAF member, assignment to a project is not designed solely for the purpose of assisting in the acquisition of capability, but also as an exposure to the strategic headquarters and inner workings of DND. This is to prepare members for future employment at more senior ranks. This leads to less experienced and prepared officers in these positions as they try to learn about the environment around them and what they are doing, while they are doing it.

⁴² Alan S. Williams, *Reinventing Canadian Defence Procurement...*, 26.

⁴³ David M Moore. “Professionalism in Defence Acquisition: The Importance of Knowledge and the Concept of the Intelligent Customer,” in *Emerging Strategies in Defense Acquisitions and Military Procurement*, ed. Kevin Burgess and Peter Antill (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), 252.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

ISED is the lead department for addressing the economic benefits to Canada that result from the Industrial and Technological Benefits Policy (ITB).⁴⁵ This policy applies to all projects over \$100 million and “requires companies that are awarded defence procurement contracts to undertake business activity in Canada equal to the value of the contract.”⁴⁶ This is achieved through the use of a Value Proposition (VP) that is evaluated at the time of the bid. Nossal argues that this is tantamount to an arrangement whereby the “vendor is required to ‘pay off’ the buyer for the privilege of having secured the contract.”⁴⁷ However, the ITB does play a role in promoting domestic business and many of the new VP provisions address under-represented groups in the defence industry in an attempt to increase the workforce and expertise in Canada.⁴⁸ In the view of Eric Dagenais, Assistant Deputy Minister (Industry Sector) for ISED, the ITB has not contributed to delays in the procurement process since its inception.⁴⁹ This is due to the fact that it is made clear at the start of the process and “Companies know what we are looking for...and people know what to expect.”⁵⁰ It is likely that delays have not been caused in the process as only those bidders who are comfortable with the ITB and VP system will bid on projects. Therefore, it is unknown how many contractors have opted not to bid on projects based on the requirements set out in the ITB. Thus, it remains to be seen what potential opportunities are being missed due to this requirement.

⁴⁵ Originally brought in with the DPS as the Industrial Regional Benefits Policy (IRB), the name was recently changed to ITB.

⁴⁶ Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. “The Industrial and Technological Benefits Policy.” Accessed 6 April, 2019. https://www.canada.ca/en/innovation-science-economic-development/news/2017/04/the_industrial_andtechnologicalbenefitpolicy.html.

⁴⁷ Kim Nossal, *Charlie Foxtrot...*, 70.

⁴⁸ Senate, Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, no. 1, Tuesday, 19 February 2019.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

SOLUTIONS

Intelligent Customers

The United Kingdom (UK) Ministry of Defence has started to look at the value of “becoming an intelligent customer and in being able to actually specify the capability that it requires.”⁵¹ As a goal, the Intelligent Customer would “avoid the additional costs associated with changes to specification and over specification during the development phase of a capability.”⁵² This means increasing the knowledge base of the procurement professional, whether military or civilian. The new specialist must have knowledge of more of the systems related to defence acquisitions, including supply chain management, while demonstrating advanced thinking and problem solving skills.⁵³

The concept of the Intelligent Customer can be applied to the role of CAF members in procurement. The shortcomings of CAF personnel were outlined in the section dealing with the DND and PSPC relationship in the Canadian procurement system. David Perry addresses this knowledge and experience gap by suggesting that postings for personnel in procurement should be lengthened and perhaps synchronized with project milestones in order to capitalize on knowledge transfer.⁵⁴ He goes further one year later in suggesting that defence procurement should be considered a specialty within the CAF, allowing for promotion and career advancement along this non-command path.⁵⁵ This professionalization and commitment to renewed investment in the

⁵¹ Derrick J. Neal, “Defence Acquisition: A New Beast or a Dinosaur” in *Emerging Strategies in Defense Acquisitions and Military Procurement*, ed. Kevin Burgess and Peter Antill (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), 161.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ David M. Moore, “Professionalism in Defence Acquisition: The Importance of Knowledge and the Concept of the Intelligent Customer,” in *Emerging Strategies in Defense Acquisitions and Military Procurement*, ed. Kevin Burgess and Peter Antill (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), 255.

⁵⁴ David Perry, *Putting The ‘Armed’ Back Into The Canadian Armed Forces...*, 20.

⁵⁵ David Perry, “Fixing Procurement,” (Calgary: Canadian Global Affairs Institute, 2016), 2.

procurement workforce is echoed in SSE through Initiative 98, where there is recognition of the need to increase capacity and the skills of those working in the unique field of defence procurement.⁵⁶ The benefits of a knowledgeable procurement staff are documented: “that purchasers with high skill levels and knowledge have a significant impact on financial performance and operational efficiency in terms of quality improvement, design and reduction of lead times.”⁵⁷ This sort of initiative will address some of the issues surrounding individual skill levels in procurement, but the solution lies in CAF leadership choosing the right personnel and committing to long-term development and career opportunities.

Changes to the System – Foreign Approaches

Changes to the overall system can take many forms, from small tweaks to a major overhaul. For one, Alan Williams believes that “Fixing the problem ‘removing unnecessary complexity’ requires the removal of some players and interests from the process in whole or in part and the elimination of rules and procedures that sustain the complexity.”⁵⁸ The challenge functions and whole of government approach combined with the diffusion of responsibility that come from the multi-departmental approach will be hard to disrupt. Nonetheless, other countries have foregone the multi-departmental approach and reformed their procurement systems to establish centralized control. The UK administers its procurement under the Defence Equipment and Support organization

⁵⁶ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged...*, 75. Initiative 98 states “Grow and professionalize the defence procurement workforce in order to strengthen the capacity to manage the acquisition and support of today’s complex military capabilities. This includes the addition of new procurement specialists and enhanced training and professional accreditation for defence procurement personnel.”

⁵⁷ Jillian Yeow and Jakob Edler, “Innovation Procurement as Projects” *Journal of Public Procurement*, Volume 12, Issue 4, (2012), 478.

⁵⁸ Alan S. Williams, *Reinventing Canadian Defence Procurement: A View from the Inside*, (Queen's University and McGill-Queen's University Press: Kingston, 2006), xvi.

under the Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology.⁵⁹ Australia has done the same with the creation of its Defence Materiel Organisation that is responsible for the purchase, life cycle management and disposal of all Australian Defence Force military equipment.⁶⁰

France, through the creation of its *Délégation Générale pour l'Armement* (DGA), created a single authority for defence procurement that resulted in a level of professionalization that made it one of the elite employers in France. It prides itself on the technical skills of its “armament engineers” who come from the most prestigious schools, causing one author to comment that the process would be “something like restricting the recruitment of senior procurement officials to graduates of a handful of engineering schools like MIT or CalTech.”⁶¹ This combined investment in professionals and centralization of responsibility was spurred by the rising costs of defence materials and falling defence budgets.⁶² France could not afford to see procurements delayed and scarce resources misallocated or wasted, and so concrete action was taken.

Single Point of Accountability (SPA)

Each of the above examples of solutions to the system of defence procurement involves the creation of a SPA. As mentioned throughout this paper, this approach does not exist in Canada, where “No single department or minister is in charge of Canada’s multi-departmental defence procurement system.”⁶³ The closest that the Government of Canada came to a SPA is the creation of the Defence Procurement Secretariat and the

⁵⁹ Martin Auger, *Defence Procurement Organizations...*, 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Ethan B. Kapstein and Jean-Michel Oudot, “Reforming Defense Procurement: Lessons from France,” *Business and Politics* 11(2) (2009), 10.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Martin Auger, *Defence Procurement Organizations...*, 3.

DMGC. The previous discussion on the DMGC membership illustrates that it added more voices to the defence procurement agenda, as opposed to creating centralized accountability. Debate surrounding a SPA in Canada has continued for many years. Most notably, in 2006 Alan Williams advocated for a single entity, Defence Procurement Canada, that would amalgamate PSPC specialists with DND procurement resources.⁶⁴

It is human nature to look for one person to hold accountable for decisions, especially when they go wrong. This sentiment was shared during recent Senate testimony with the Chief Executive Officers of Davie Shipbuilding, Irving Shipbuilding and Seaspan Shipyards, when each was asked whether a single minister should be accountable to Parliament for defence procurement.⁶⁵ The statements from Senator Nicole Eaton indicate that she feels as though nobody is accountable to answer questions in Parliament.⁶⁶ In effect this is not true. The ministers for PSPC, DND and ISEDC could easily be asked questions in Parliament. However, trying to understand how they all interact and to trace the blame for failures would be difficult.

Much has been written to counter Mr. Williams' support for a SPA. Craig Stone argues that the competing priorities of each of the major departments involved in defence procurement would not be reduced within a single agency.⁶⁷ The priorities of each of these departments represent the will of the government and the decisions are made through Cabinet solidarity, therefore creating shared responsibility for those decisions.⁶⁸ Stone does acquiesce that one advantage to a SPA would be "to leverage the limited

⁶⁴ Alan S. Williams, *Reinventing Canadian Defence Procurement...*, 74.

⁶⁵ Senate, Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, no. 1, Wednesday, 20 March 2019. Accessed 3 April 2019. <https://sencanada.ca/en/Content/SEN/Committee/421/nffn/54615-e>.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ J. C. Stone, "A Separate Defence Procurement Agency"..., 9.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

number of people who actually have the knowledge and skillsets to implement complex military procurement projects.”⁶⁹ The creation of a SPA could therefore assist in the professionalization of the workforce but may do little, as Stone argues, to alleviate the Ministerial accountability challenges. If enacted, a central organization would only be as strong as its members and so a comprehensive training and education program would be necessary in order to support the system.⁷⁰

Canadian Collaborative Approaches

Canada is insistent on taking a collaborative and consensus-based approach to address the unique nature of the defence procurement challenges. The PSPC and DND relationship is evidence of this strategy, as was the creation of the DMGC in an effort to bring a fuller whole of government approach to procurement. This approach is so entrenched that in those instances where the government strayed from its traditional procurement structure, it was in favour of another collaborative approach, with relative success.

The National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy (NSPS), now the National Shipbuilding Strategy was designed around an overarching Secretariat that was meant “to implement and manage the NSPS and to support the governance structure. The Secretariat is composed of representatives from the Department of National Defence (DND), Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Industry Canada, and PWGSC.”⁷¹ The argument can be made that a central agency was required to manage such a large program that is

⁶⁹ J.C. Stone, “Improving the Acquisition Process in Canada,” *SPP Research Papers* 8, no. 16 (April 2015): 8.

⁷⁰ Jeffrey F. Collins and Carleton University- Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, “Executive (In)Decision? Explaining Delays in Canada’s Defence Procurement System, 2006-2015,” 2017, 232.

⁷¹ Martin Auger, *The National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy: A Five-Year Assessment* (Library of Parliament of Canada: Ottawa, 2015), 8.

designed to re-invigorate the Canadian domestic shipbuilding industry. However, there were other factors at play. Collins argues that the failure of DND to properly manage the F-35 fighter program, combined with the repeated failure of the Joint Support Ship project created a lack of trust that DND could properly handle its portion of the NSS program.⁷² It remains a key player in the process, but does not have the lead role with PSPC it usually would.⁷³ The NSS does create one agency, but from a political perspective it is still a multi-departmental endeavour with the same diffusion of responsibility and potential for competing mandates. However, it is clear that the NSS is a program that has industrial benefits at the heart of its mandate, which creates a first among equals when conflicts arise.⁷⁴ There is a clear government focus for the program that is often absent in other smaller projects, which will keep departments on track. The NSS is a major political and strategic effort that is too big to fail, thus no effort will be spared to ensure its success.

One of the most successful defence procurement projects was not a new acquisition, but rather a modernization program. The \$4.3 billion *Halifax Class* Modernization (HCM) project was designed to extend the life of the *Halifax Class* frigates while increasing their combat capability for contemporary threats.⁷⁵ To tackle this program, the government again looked to a collaborative approach by creating the Committee of Sponsors (CoS). This group “was co-chaired by the Commander of the RCN [Royal Canadian Navy] and ADM (Mat) and included the ADM for Procurement at

⁷² Jeffrey F. Collins, "Executive (In)Decision?"..., 87, 99.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Public Services and Procurement Canada, “About the National Shipbuilding Strategy,” Accessed 15 April, 2019. <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/app-acq/amd-dp/mer-sea/sncn-nss/apropos-about-eng.html>.

⁷⁵ Jeffrey F. Collins , "Executive (In)Decision?"..., 35, 193, 194.

PSPC and the Chief Executive Officers of Lockheed Martin Canada and the two shipyards, Seaspan and Irving.”⁷⁶ The CoS met regularly and was successful in overcoming some of the tensions that tend to plague projects, built trust and kept the project on track.⁷⁷ Much of the success is due to the fact that the importance of the project was very clear across the whole of the federal government, thereby building sustained support.⁷⁸ The challenges facing the Royal Canadian Navy concerning its growing capability gaps, combined with the timeline for the arrival of the Canadian Surface Combatant made for a compelling argument to get alignment across departments in order to move this program forward.⁷⁹ Although successful, Collins argues that the CoS construct may not be feasible for all major acquisitions based on the significant time investment required by the major players.⁸⁰ Additionally, it does not address the diffusion of responsibility and accountability that challenges the current system. However, its success does provide another option for the Government of Canada in an effort to leverage some of the benefits of a SPA while not totally rejecting its traditional collaborative and multi-departmental approach to defence procurement.

CONCLUSION

The unique nature of defence procurement results in challenges that governments have to address. The competing priorities of government policy, economic benefits, budgetary constraints, and maximizing defence capability form challenges that Canada has to overcome. In peacetime, procurement is the most difficult task facing DND. The large dollar values associated with defence procurement cause a high level of scrutiny

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 218.

and attention, and rightfully so. Delays and failures have cost taxpayers millions of dollars and eroded trust in the ability of the government to effectively handle this portfolio. In addition to delays that cost millions of dollars, poor procurement practices can ultimately mean that the CAF may face a reduction in the capability available to uphold its responsibility to defend Canada and Canadians.

This paper argued that Canadian defence procurement is challenged by the unique nature of this type of procurement and the multi-departmental approach employed in Canada. The competing priorities of the departments involved, combined with the diffusion of responsibility reduces accountability for decision-making. The role that defence policy plays in determining budgets and maintaining the stability of these economic commitments makes defence procurement over the long-term difficult to manage. Added to this is the need for a strong domestic defence industry to maintain an appropriate level of sovereignty.

Challenges within Canadian defence procurement have been identified both with the system overall, as well as with the personnel involved. The multi-departmental approach brings different priorities and mandates into play, which can come into conflict. There are also cultural and experiential factors at play between PSPC and DND/CAF that impact the co-lead roles that each plays in procurement. The creation of a SPA was examined, as was the professionalization of procurement and increased training and support for CAF personnel involved in procurement. Each of these approaches has strengths and weaknesses, but the right investments personnel and governance will provide a solution to some of the challenges discussed. As noted in the paper, investment

in professional development and training will reap rewards, and will soon be necessary given the pace of technological advancement in the defence sector.

The discussions surrounding a SPA and its value in reducing inter-departmental frictions and overcoming competing priorities provides an alternative approach for Canada. It is apparent through the NSS Secretariat and HCM Committee of Sponsors examples that the Government of Canada is committed to a collaborative and multi-departmental approach to defence procurement. Due to the large investment in time and resources required, these two approaches may not form the basis for all future procurements. However, their relative success provides an alternative and possibly scalable multi-departmental option for major acquisitions on the horizon.

Whatever approach the Canadian Government chooses to take to meet the increasing challenges of defence procurement, it must address the myriad issues that exist both in the bureaucratic process and in the need for further professionalization of personnel. The speed at which the security environment is changing will not slow while numerous departments navigate the cumbersome bureaucratic process and discuss the best solution.

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