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SSE'S COMPREHENSIVE MILITARY FAMILY PLAN AND FULL-TIME CHILDCARE

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JCSP 45

Exercise Solo Flight

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INTRODUCTION

The homepage for Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) recruiting succinctly states, “You’ve never had a job like this”.¹ The notions of “. . . service before self, the lawful, ordered application of military force, and the acceptance of the concept of unlimited liability” truly make employment in the CAF a unique lifestyle.² The Government of Canada (GoC) has recognised this uniqueness, with people being the core to enabling the CAF to deliver upon the defence and security mandate.³ The entire first chapter of *Strong, Secured, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy* (SSE) is dedicated to people, promoting attraction and retention of personnel with a commitment to care, services, and support.⁴ Enrollment in the CAF does not erase all vestiges of identity, replacing it with that of a soldier, sailor, or aviator; it simply adds another facet. In many cases these identities include family, and as such, the CAF lifestyle affects not only members, but also families.

Prior to SSE, three reports concerning military families were published in 2013 from separate sources within the Department of National Defence (DND), Chief Review Services (CRS), the Ombudsman, and the Military Family Services Program (MFSP).⁵

¹Department of National Defence, “Canadian Armed Forces,” last accessed 20 April 2019, <https://forces.ca/en/>.

²Department of National Defence, *Duty With Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Defence Academy – Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2009), 9.

³Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy*, (Ottawa: National Defence, 2017), 19.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Military Family Support Programs and Services* (Ottawa: National Defence, 2013): iii, last accessed 5 May 2019, <https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/FamilyResearch/Documents/Other%20Research/CRS%20Report%20Evaluation%20of%20Military%20Family%20Support%20Programs%20and%20Services.pdf>; Pierre Daigle, *On the Homefront: Assessing the Well-being of Canada’s Military Families in the New Millennium* (Ottawa: DND/CF Ombudsman, 2013): 1, last accessed 5 May 2019,

All three reports noted challenges facing families. The Ombudsman specifically identified geographical relocation, operational deployments, and the relentless upheaval of military life as the major challenges.⁶ Relocation itself is not, however, unique to the CAF. The Ombudsman noted though, that military families relocate three times more often than their civilian counterparts do.⁷ To further compound this issue, military families also face “. . . the reality that they usually have limited influence over *where* they are posted, *when* they are posted, and for *how long*”.⁸

SSE directs “the implementation of a Comprehensive Military Family Plan [that] will go a long way to minimizing the disruptions associated with frequent relocation”.⁹ The CRS report highlighted three areas with unmet support needs: childcare, dependant(s) health care, and spousal employment/career support.¹⁰ This paper examines the impacts of frequent relocations in relation to access to childcare delivery, and recommending potential policy inclusions in the Comprehensive Military Family Plan.

To examine impacts of potential childcare options, three areas are analysed. First, the history of family support services evolution within DND to extract potential legacy issues. Second, the extant authorities, policies, and structures to determine potential limitations. Finally, the suitability to improve continuity and the feasibility, considering

http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/assets/OMBUDSMAN_Internet/docs/en/mf-fm-eng.pdf; Department of National Defence, *CF Child Care Status Update 2013* (Ottawa: Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services, 2013): 2, last accessed 21 April 2019, <https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/FamilyResearch/Documents/CF%20Child%20Care%20Status%20Update%20January%202013%20Final%20EN.pdf>.

⁶Pierre Daigle, *On the Homefront* . . . , 4.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* . . . , 28.

¹⁰Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Military Family Support* . . . , iv.

limitations of potential options are outlined and assessed. The perspectives and roles of various key stakeholders are also considered throughout.

The provision of childcare in Canada is a complex issue involving numerous facets, including growing demand and prohibitive costs.¹¹ The CRS report underscored the complex administrative and jurisdictional problems of interprovincial/territorial relocation challenges and unmet needs.¹² It noted that:

While it will be difficult for the DND/[CAF] to make significant progress on access to health care and spousal employment support due to systematic issues, the Department's leadership and sustained effort is required to address these systematic disadvantages for military families. Improvements to continuity of access to child care [sic] are more directly achievable by the DND/[CAF] and options to improve continuity for military families should be identified and assessed for implementation.¹³

Given these complexities, the report made two recommendations. First, a working group of DND and provincial/territorial stakeholders to address access to health care and spousal employment.¹⁴ Second, within DND/CAF feasible options be identified, assessed, and implemented to address access to childcare.¹⁵ The scope of the paper is limited explicitly to access to childcare.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Since its inception, family support services have undergone numerous permutations of name, mandate, and structural changes. To alleviate confusion, for the

¹¹Statistics Canada, "Child care in Canada," last modified 30 November 2015, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-652-x/89-652-x2014005-eng.htm>; Childcare Resource and Research Unit, "Child care Canada," last accessed 5 May 2019, <https://www.childcarecanada.org/>.

¹²Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Military Family Support* . . . , iv.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 9; Department of National Defence, "National Defence advances the Seamless Canada . . . ; The Seamless Canada initiative launched in 2018 in direct response to this recommendation.

¹⁵Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Military Family Support* . . . , 9; Department of National Defence, "National Defence advances the Seamless Canada initiative with provinces and territories," last modified 12 December 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2018/12/national-defence-advances-the-seamless-canada-initiative-with-provinces-and-territories.html>.

purposes of this paper, the common language of morale and welfare (MW) programs current organisation is adopted.¹⁶ Similarly, differentiation between Public and Non-Public Property (NPP) and their respective limitations require understanding.¹⁷ For better comprehension of the current childcare model, why it was chosen, and its current limitations, it is beneficial to garner an appreciation of MW history within the Canadian military.

1960s – 1970s

Prior to Unification in 1968, NPP was almost exclusively managed locally.¹⁸ With Unification came a Treasury Board minute, the origins of nationally coordinated NPP programs, the centralisation of NPP funds, and by 1974, Board of Director oversight.¹⁹ The governance and focus NPP and MW would not change dramatically for another 17 years. The current model was born of an inherently joint program administered by CAF

¹⁶Morale and welfare programs refers to all generic support services both Public and Non-Public Property funded including personnel support programs, the Service Income Security Insurance Plan, and military family services. It does not include services provided by the CAF Chaplain and Health Services branches. Specific current programs are referenced where appropriate

¹⁷Department of National Defence, A-PS-110-001/AG-002, *Volume 1 Public Support for Morale and Welfare Programs and Non Public Property* (Ottawa: National Defence, 2007), chap. 1 p. 1, last accessed 22 April 2019,

https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/Library/PoliciesandRegulations/Corporate/Documents/aps110_e.pdf; Mary Turner, “Non-Public Property: Unraveling the Mystery,” last modified 19 June 2013,

https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/CFPFSS/corporate%20strategy/npp_education/Pages/Demystifying-NPP.aspx; Department of National Defence, A-FN-105-001/AG-001, *Policy and Procedures for Non-Public Property (NPP) accounting* (Ottawa: National Defence) chap. 1 p. 3, chap. 3 p. 1, last modified 1 February 2019,

<https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/Library/PoliciesandRegulations/Finance/AFN105/Pages/default.aspx>; Public with an upper case “P” refers to the Crown in right of Canada, identical in nature to the majority of DND/CAF funding, subject to the Financial Administration Act. NPP is defined under the National Defence Act and includes “all money and property, other than issues of material, received for or administered by or through messes, institutes or canteens of the Canadian [Armed] Forces”. It is managed through Chief of Defence Staff direction. Both are in essence forms of public funding with government regulation and oversight.

¹⁸Department of National Defence, A-PS-110-001/AG-002 . . . chap. 1 p. 4.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

general officers.²⁰ Within ten years, there were new voices identifying the need for change, particularly regarding support for military families.

1980s

The initial catalyst for family support changes was a group of military spouses at Canadian Armed Forces Base Penhold, Alberta, who, in 1984, “expressed concern about the lack of resource centres, day cares and emergency family shelters in order to support the well-being of the military family and community”.²¹ To their dismay, the base commander resisted meetings, arguing that concerns be directed to the local member of the provincial legislature.²² This lack of voice and participation on matters affecting military families left the spouses group with a sense of powerlessness.²³ It was further aggravated by a Ministerial response prohibiting the group’s meeting on DND property due to their perceived political nature, to which the group submitted a Charter of Rights and Freedoms challenge; specifically challenging that the right to freedom of association, freedom of expression and freedom of speech had be violated.²⁴ It was this claim and related Senate hearings that finally spurred DND into a review.

The review concluded that a forum whereby civilian spouses could raise concerns with military authorities, and the subsequent 1989 *Report Family Support* which recommended “. . . institutionalizing a service infrastructure with the sole mandate of

²⁰Department of National Defence, “CDS Guidance: Canadian Forces Morale and Warfare Programs,” *CDS Guidance* (January 2004) 1, last accessed 22 April 2019, <https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/Library/PoliciesandRegulations/Corporate/Documents/CDS%20Guidance-E-Final-5Jan04.pdf>.

²¹Department of National Defence, *Military Family Services Program: Retrospective of a Military Family Legacy* (Ottawa: National Defence, 2016) 1, last accessed 21 April 2019, <https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/ResourcesMFRCS/Documents/2017%20Documents/Foundational%20documents/Retropective%20of%20a%20Military%20Family%20Legacy,%20Eng.pdf>.

²²*Ibid.*, 2.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

military family and community well-being and for provision of facilities for multi-service family resource centres” was the genesis of many of today’s contemporary programs.²⁵

As the MFSP remarked in its 2016 *Retrospective of a Military Family Legacy*:

The events over the period 1984 to 1990 led by [the Penhold spousal group]’s efforts set the stage for the family support systems in place today. Military Family Resource Centres, in Canada and worldwide, the Family Information Line, FamilyForce.ca, the National Military Family Council and Director Military Family Services are all in place due to the ground breaking efforts by a handful of spouses who wanted to improve the quality of life of Canadian Armed Forces families.²⁶

Contextually, these tumultuous events occurred less than a generation ago. Undoubtedly, some current military spouses still recall the difficulties. It is therefore imperative that any policy proposal regarding childcare involve a wide-ranging collaborative and meaningful consultation with military spouses. The consequence of not doing so could again be Charter claims in the courts. Moving from the combative 1980s into the 1990s, MW would undergo its next phase of evolution: civilianisation.

1990s – 2000s

Founded in 1991 to coordinate, advise, and ensure quality standards amongst the newly nationwide resource centres, “the [MFSP] promotes and facilitates community-based services and programs to enhance the well-being of military families”.²⁷ Initially, the multi-service family resource centres, precursors to the contemporary MFRCs, were under the control of the local base commanders.²⁸ The then Assistant Deputy Minister (Personnel) noted such a structure was contrary to the requirement for independence from

²⁵Department of National Defence, *Military Family Services Program: Retrospective . . .*, 2-4.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 3.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 6; Department of National Defence. *Parameters 4 Practice* (Ottawa: Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services, 2017) 6, last accessed 5 May 2019, <https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/ResourcesMFRCs/Documents/2017%20Documents/Parameters%204%20Practice/Parameters%204%20Practice%20E%20NEW%20DEC%202017.pdf>.

²⁸Department of National Defence, *Military Family Services Program: Retrospective . . .*, 5.

the chain of command. As such the concept of third-party, incorporated, not-for-profit entities was developed, which, while base commanders remained accountable to their respective Command for managing funding, enabled other funding sources.²⁹ With the creation of MFSP, the resources centres, and the jumble of funding sources, came the need to review MW financial management in general.

A review of MFSP was conducted in 1996, resulting in a new MW business model.³⁰ Amongst the amendments was the creation of a centralised NPP organisation, originally headed by a civilian, responsible for both NPP and Public funded MW programs delivery.³¹ With the amalgamation, came a shift from military positions to civilian NPP staff.³² This model enabled Public reimbursement NPP expenditures based on the level, nature, and scale of support services.³³ Integral to the model is “. . . families have access to a reasonable level of MW programs and facilities”, with support requirements varying amongst geographical locations due to size of military population, and proximity and size of supporting civilian populations.³⁴ To adapt MW programs, a formal system of cyclical community needs assessments now identifies service gaps to meet the specific needs of a location.³⁵

In response to the reports of the 1980s, local volunteer boards comprising a minimum of 51% civilian family members were developed to manage resource centres.³⁶

²⁹Department of National Defence, *Military Family Services Program: Retrospective . . .*, 5, 6, 8.

³⁰Department of National Defence, A-PS-110-001/AG-002 . . . chap. 1 p. 5.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*; Department of National Defence, *Military Family Services Program: Retrospective . . .*, 9.

³⁴Department of National Defence, A-PS-110-001/AG-002 . . . chap. 1 p. 10, chap. 4 p.2.

³⁵Department of National Defence, CDS Guidance . . . , 3; Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Military Family Support . . .*, Annex A p. 3; Department of National Defence. *Parameters 4 Practice . . .*, 13.

³⁶Department of National Defence, *Military Family Services Program: Retrospective . . .*, 6; Department of National Defence. *Parameters 4 Practice . . .*, 8.

Involvement of local MFRC volunteers is essential to policy creation, as they understand the community, and delivery of frontline services. Similarly, central NPP staff interpret applicable policies, and ultimately fund MFSP services. Quality services cannot be delivered without them, regardless of how well policies are written. Understanding the historical transition from CAF, top-down directed programs to consultative, needs assessment based programs provides context to examine the current array of services, and related issues.

CONTEMPORARY SYSTEM CONTENT

While this paper focuses on MW programs, and the CAF is committed to “provide services for the well-being of CAF members and their families”, it is critical to distinguish that obtaining childcare remains completely the responsibility of individual military members.³⁷ The MFSP cannot resolve all family oriented challenges for legitimate reasons; other authorities however, may be of assistance. Recognising this fact, the CAF Family Network, as illustrated in Figure 1, facilitates communications with the various organisations and authorities.³⁸

³⁷Department of National Defence, DAOD 5044-1, *Families* (Ottawa: National Defence, 2002), last modified 27 June 2017, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5044/5044-1-families.html#cp>.

³⁸*Ibid.*

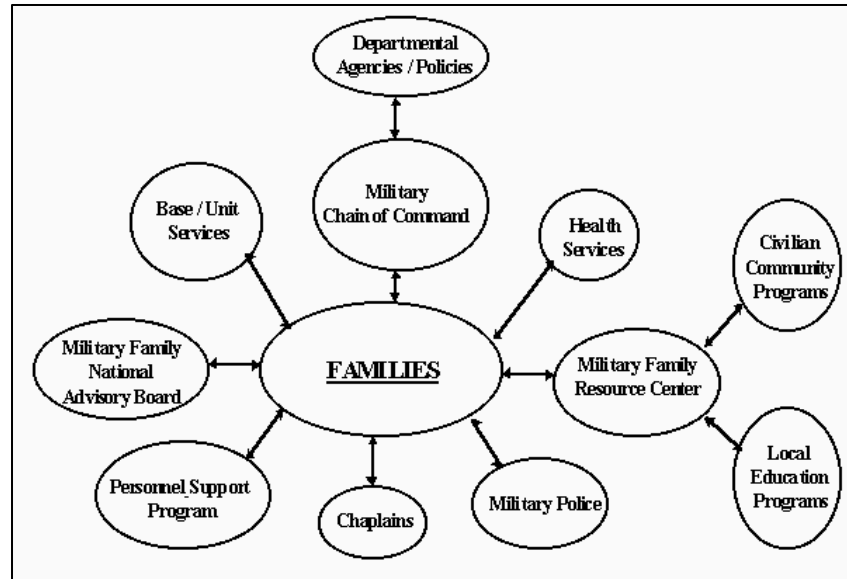


Figure 1 – Canadian Armed Forces Family Network

Source: DAOD 5044-1 *Families*.

To assist members in preparing for the contingencies of military life, the CAF has ordered that “all Regular Force and Primary Reserve members who are responsible for providing financial, health care or other support to a family member shall prepare [a Family Care Plan] . . .”.³⁹ Although completion of the Family Care Plan (FCP) form is mandatory, retention by the local MFRC to assist in supporting families during absences due to military operational requirements is voluntary.⁴⁰ The FCP is the gateway to accessing certain MFRC services including specific childcare categories.

The proximity to DND establishments combined with flexible hours and programming generally geared towards the military lifestyle has made MFRC childcare highly sought after.⁴¹ The MFSP report noted that on average, MFRC waiting lists for full-time care ranged from one year for infants, seven months for toddlers, and six

³⁹Department of National Defence, DAOD 5044-1 . . .

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Pierre Daigle, *On the Homefront . . .*, 65.

months with for those with preschoolers.⁴² The report argued however that, “waitlists are not suitable indicators [for total space demand] as families tend to put their children on several waitlists at the same time and do not always remove their names from waitlists when child care is found”.⁴³ While parents may use multiple lists, it does not negate the fact that waitlist times reflect those who actually obtained spots. It is conceded, however, that waitlists do not form a true comparison, as many provinces that maintain jurisdiction over licensed childcare facilities do not publish wait times.⁴⁴ More concerning are the notions that the CAF childcare need was identified for the most part anecdotally, and data from the various surveys is bias given respondents were few in number and motivated by individual concern.⁴⁵ Given the report itself cited that “more than half (57%) of [CAF] families participating in the *2009 CF Child Care Symposium* were unable to obtain child care [sic] services from their MFRC, due to spaces already filled”, combined with other MFSP and ombudsman reports citing childcare as a major issue, the need is undoubtedly genuine.⁴⁶ Arguments downplaying the needs of stakeholders detract from the consultation process and counter the SSE intent.

⁴²Department of National Defence, *CF Child Care Status Update* . . . , 14.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁴⁴Ministry of Education, “Early Years and Child Care Report 2018,” last modified 1 November 2018, <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/EarlyYearsChildCareAnnualReport2018.pdf>; Families, “Frequently Asked Questions – For Families,” last accessed 22 April 2019, https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/families/families_faqs.html#b8; Ministry of Health, *Parents’ Guide to Selecting and Monitoring Child Care in BC* (Victoria: Ministry of Health, 2016), last accessed 21 April 2019, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/child-day-care/parents_guide_to_selecting_and_monitoring_child_care_in_bc_june_2016.pdf; Martha Friendly *et al.*, “The Big Picture,” in *Early Childhood education and care in Canada 2016* (Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2018), last accessed 21 April 2019, <https://www.childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC2016-Comparative-Tables.pdf>.

⁴⁵Department of National Defence, *CF Child Care Status Update* . . . , 18.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 14; Pierre Daigle, *On the Homefront* . . . , 1, Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Military Family Support* . . . iii.

MFRCs currently deliver childcare through three categories: emergency, casual, and primary/full-time. Each category focusses on a specific need and is subject to distinct eligibility and funding requirements.

Emergency Childcare

Emergency childcare as its name implies supports families during extenuating challenges on an approved case-by-case basis by the local MFRC. It focusses on addressing short-term childcare needs through: onsite supervision of up to 96 hours per emergency, financial reimbursement, or other coordination as the situation may dictate. Emergency childcare is captured within Public funds as it is considered a MFSP service, not be confused with NPP funded site-specific services.⁴⁷ Amongst the unique circumstances for emergency childcare, cases “when the Canadian Armed Forces member requires emergency short-term child care to secure essential necessities that have not already been covered through [the relocation program] within three months after posting” warranted explicit inclusion.⁴⁸ Thus, while not intended for continuous use, MFRC emergency childcare can provide some immediate reprieve upon relocation. A total however, 12 working days coverage, for use only within the first three months, provides only limited service compared to the waiting list times.

⁴⁷Department of National Defence, *Funding and Reporting Guide*, (Ottawa: Military Family Services Program, 2017) 2, 4, last accessed 22 April 2019.
<https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/ResourcesMFRCs/Documents/2017%20Documents/Foundational%20documents/MFSP%20Funding%20Guide%20and%20Reporting%20Guide%2002%20FEB%202017%20ENG.pdf>.

⁴⁸Department of National Defence, “Emergency Child Care,” last accessed 22 April 2019,
<https://www.cafconnection.ca/National/Programs-Services/For-Parents-and-Caregivers/Child-Care/Emergency-Child-Care.aspx>.

Casual Childcare

Another Public funded MFSP service is casual childcare.⁴⁹ Casual childcare is a part-time service with set weekly availability schedules, normally two to three sessions per week.⁵⁰ Generally, individual sessions are registered in advance on a first come, pay-as-you-go basis with each MFRC establishing schedules, rates, and age eligibility. 17 Wing Winnipeg recently added a modified version it calls occasional childcare, which offers service six days weekly, and includes the ability to reserve spaces two weeks in advance.⁵¹ Casual childcare is not intended as a replacement for full-time care.⁵²

Full-time Childcare

Currently, licensed full-time childcare is a MFSP site-specific service eligible for NPP, with user-pay operations to better meet the need in their respective communities.⁵³ Licencing of these facilities is through respective provincial/territorial authorities similar to any other facility within the area. Group sizes, supervision ratios, and enrollment amongst other standards are therefore also subject to provincial/territorial regulation, which may lead to non-CAF related enrollment. With this perceived drawback however, is the certification of programming, staff qualifications, and potential funding.⁵⁴ Any pan-CAF policy regarding childcare therefore involves the provincial/territorial authorities. The Seamless Canada agenda provides a likely avenue to initiate conversation.

⁴⁹Department of National Defence, *Funding and Reporting Guide* . . . , 4.

⁵⁰Department of National Defence, "Casual Child Care," last accessed 3 May 2019. <https://www.cafconnection.ca/Greenwood/Children-Teens/Child-Care/Licensed-Casual-Child-Care.aspx>.

⁵¹Department of National Defence, "Occasional Child Care," last accessed 3 May 2019, [https://www.cafconnection.ca/Winnipeg/Children-Teens/Child-Care/Occasional-Child-Care-\(OCC\).aspx](https://www.cafconnection.ca/Winnipeg/Children-Teens/Child-Care/Occasional-Child-Care-(OCC).aspx).

⁵²Department of National Defence, "Casual Child Care," . . .

⁵³Department of National Defence, *Funding and Reporting Guide* . . . , 2, 7; Department of National Defence, *CF Child Care Status Update* . . . , 2.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 6-7.

Diversity and Inclusion

The CAF comprised of both full-time Regular Force (RegF), and Reserve Force (ResF) personnel is a highly diverse organisation. The contemporary military family is likewise highly diverse, with language, single parents, service couples, special needs, and shift-work forming but a few of the intersectional factors into which childcare concerns must be considered. As the first-line of support, MFRCs actively implement an inclusion policy to facilitate access to services.⁵⁵ Included within the policy is the offering services in both official languages, assistance navigating provincial disability services, and flexibility to accommodate the peculiarities of CAF service.⁵⁶ These efforts cannot remain stagnant, as the demographics of the CAF change, so to must its support policies.

Included within SSE is an emphasis “. . . on recruiting and retaining under-represented populations within the Canadian Armed Forces, including, but not limited to, women, Indigenous peoples, and members of visible minorities”.⁵⁷ According to 2017 data, 47% of the RegF are parents.⁵⁸ While 85% of parents are male, so too are the majority of CAF members in general.⁵⁹ As illustrated in Table 1, a higher percentage of female members are single (22%), or part of a service couple (53%), than their male counterparts (12% and 9% respectively).⁶⁰

⁵⁵Department of National Defence. *Parameters 4 Practice* . . . , 14.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 12- 14.

⁵⁷Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* . . . , 23.

⁵⁸L. Manser, *Profile of Military Families in Canada: 2017 Regular Force Demographics* (Ottawa: Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services, 2018) 13, last accessed 5 May 2019, <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/7b46894d-91aa-421b-912f-6293b0cab4b9/Profile-of-Military-Families-in-Canada-2017-RegF-Demographics-Report-FINAL-June-2018.pdf.aspx>.

⁵⁹*Ibid.* 14; Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* . . . , 23.

⁶⁰L. Manser, *Profile of Military Families in Canada* . . . , 14.

Table 1 - Marital Status of RegF Personnel in Canada with Children by Gender

Marital Status	% of Female RegF With Children	% of Male RegF With Children	TOTAL
SINGLE	22%	12%	(4,055) 14%
MARRIED / COMMON-LAW TO CIVILIAN	24%	70%	(20,851) 70%
MARRIED / COMMON-LAW TO MILITARY MEMBER (PART OF A DUAL SERVICE COUPLE)	53%	9%	(4,695) 16%
TOTAL	100%	100%	(29,601) 100%

Source: Manser, *Profile of Military Families in Canada: 2017 Regular Force Demographics*, 14.

While correlation may not equate to causation, it is a strong possibility the ratio of single parents and service couples may increase as the number of female personnel does. Given such diversity, no one solution is a panacea. The underlying goal of any proposed policy regarding MFSP childcare is not to advantage military families, but rather to remove existing disadvantages, all the while, promoting inclusion.

Allied Nations

Childcare systems accessible to allied nations also provide possible examples to adapt. While each nation is unique in its force(s) structure, and domestic childcare systems, the issue of access to childcare is commonplace.⁶¹

⁶¹Department of National Defence, *CF Child Care Status Update . . .*, 12; Department of Defence, “Childcare Assistance,” last accessed 5 May 2019, <http://www.defence.gov.au/DCO/Family/kids/childcare.asp>; One Tree Community Services, “One Tree Defence Care Unit,” last accessed 5 May 2019, <https://dcu.onetree.org.au/>; Ministry of Defence. “Armed Forces Childcare Scheme,” last accessed 5 May 2019, <http://www.modchildcare.co.uk/armed-forces/>; Gail L. Zellman *et al*, *Options for Improving the Military Child Care System* (Arlington: RAND Corporation, 2008) 23-25, last accessed 5 May 2019, https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP217.html; Australia incorporates a national childcare system through a third-party contractor that supports priority access for military families and local communities. It further enables personnel to leverage pre-tax salaries in exchange for equivalent childcare services. Financial incentives are also extended to companies that provide work-related childcare for military dependents. Similar to Australia, the British Ministry of Defence until recently provided financial vouchers in lieu of salary for the childcare. The voucher program was replaced as of 31 August 2018 with the tax-free childcare program with the government adding 20p per 80p of contribution by military parents to a maximum of 2,000 pounds per child, per year. The United States military has a highly comprehensive childcare system. It comprises of 800 child development centres at defence establishments with standard fees based on family income. An additional network of more than 9,000 approved in-home childcare providers supports the on base centres with flexible after-hours, and weekend services.

PROCESS OPTIONS

SSE acknowledges the various challenges faced by military families during the relocation process, and directs change. The status quo, without significant change is therefore not an option. Three alternatives do however exist: alleviate the demand on the current model, augment resources to mitigate the current demand, and/or change the delivery model to focus available resources towards the greatest effect. The benefits and shortcomings of each option are examined in turn.

Reduction in Demand

One notion, suggested by senior CAF officers to mitigate numerous personnel issues is to extend the duration of geographical postings, thereby reducing the number of families relocating each year.⁶² Though the math is not as simple to as making postings an average of three times longer so as to equal the national average of relocation frequency, implementing this option would undoubtedly reduce the number of families seeking new child care options.⁶³ Not all postings require geographical relocation. Career progression and diversity may be feasible at larger CAF bases and wings where multiple positions are available within a career field.⁶⁴ Systemic issues remain however with this option.

The demand for RegF personnel at smaller defence establishments including support to ResF units, recruiting centres, and certain Royal Canadian Air Force wings and detachments will continue to exist. While improved career management may assist in

⁶²As presented to the Joint Command and Staff Program during an experiential learning visit to Ottawa 13-15 February 2019.

⁶³Pierre Daigle, *On the Homefront . . .*, 4.

⁶⁴L. Manser, *State of Militaries Families in Canada: Issues Facing Regular Force Members and Their Families* (Ottawa: Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services, 2018) 27, last accessed 5 May 2019, <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/5fbcf542-d946-4d6f-b7f9-70ab8c466bb4/State-of-Military-Families-in-Canada-August-2018.pdf.aspx>.

assigning the best candidates for positions, extending an individual's duration in a single position for up to nine years may still be untenable. Given 47% of RegF personnel are parents, families will continue to be impacted. Similarly, regardless of the size of an establishment, certain specialty, or low-density occupations, particularly for officers such as public affairs, construction, maintenance, and legal are rare commodities at most DND establishments, more so as ranks increase. Posting extensions and stagnation are unsustainable for the health of these type of occupations. Such personnel are therefore perpetually disadvantaged regarding relocation frequency. Finally, this effort to reduce the number of relocations may be somewhat offset by the directed SSE increase of 3,500 RegF personnel, which if ratios remain constant, extrapolates to an approximate 1,500 additional families.⁶⁵ The number of additional families have a greater impact on resource allocation as well.

Augmented Resources

Additional resource allocation including funding, personnel, and infrastructure to MFRCs to increase capacity is an intuitive means to mitigating demand. SSE identified a six million dollar annual Public increase to modernise MFSP, which could include emergency and casual childcare programs.⁶⁶ The CRS report also noted that MSFSP management and overhead costs at 41% exceeded the average for businesses (20%), and even charity organisations (35%) who must administer fundraising to operate.⁶⁷ It cited a

⁶⁵Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* . . . , 19; This number extrapolates 47% of the RegF while factoring the duplication within 16% service couples.

⁶⁶Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* . . . , 29.

⁶⁷Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Military Family Support* . . . , 31.

lack of coordination, and duplicated effort as possible causes for the high overhead.⁶⁸

Savings from overhead cost reductions could also benefit childcare programs.

A pan-CAF fulltime childcare system was also considered as a replacement to the mix of provincial systems within the MFSP report.⁶⁹ A pan-CAF system would then be a MFSP service with Public funding. The report estimated an initial 43 million cost with an additional four million annually for the program.⁷⁰ Such a transition would also require formal Treasury Board submission approval for funding and authority, a painstaking, but surmountable systematic barrier.⁷¹ Funding alone though, is not the only lacking resource.

The MFSP report identified staffing as a primary concern amongst MFRCs operators with more than 83% reporting issues.⁷² The early childhood education and care is a highly valued sector, with demand growing 40% between 2011 and 2007.⁷³ The rate of growth in the CAF can only accelerate as gender equity efforts continue to advance.⁷⁴ Without the needed staff, MFRCs are unable to increase the number of spaces, even if the physical space was available, as one in four centres are at capacity.⁷⁵

Full-time Prioritisation

To meet the needs of relocating families while remaining within current resources constraints, systematic changes are required. One option remains the aforementioned pan-

⁶⁸Department of National Defence, *Evaluation of Military Family Support* . . . , 31.

⁶⁹Department of National Defence, *CF Child Care Status Update* . . . , 29.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 5.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 15.

⁷³*Ibid.*

⁷⁴Status of Women Canada, "Creation of the Department for Women and Gender Equality," last accessed 3 May 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/status-women/news/2018/12/creation-of-the-department-for-women-and-gender-equality.html>.

⁷⁵Department of National Defence, *CF Child Care Status Update* . . . , 15.

CAF full-time solution. Despite additional SSE funding, and potential overhead cost savings, this option may still be cost prohibitive, though it may be more palatable with annual costs potentially accounted for.

A second option is implementing current full-time services based on yearly contracts. Priority would go to those families newly posted to the geographical area. The notion being that one year would provide a sufficient buffer to enable families to register on existing waitlists. Year-long extensions could be offered as space permits. This option aligns with MFSP characteristics of offering a unique service in response to the needs of military families, while encouraging integration into the local community.⁷⁶ Exemptions could remain for those families enrolled in special needs childcare. This full-time program would remain under the jurisdiction of the provinces/territories, and subject to their enrollment criteria.

CONCLUSION

Recognising that the above proposals are only initial concepts, they provide a nexus that could be further developed into test programs, and perhaps eventually a national system. Ideally, the recommended solution is a combination of all the presented options. SSE provides initial funding to make small-scale changes. The funding could with Seamless Canada coordination, develop the one-year option. Further costing analysis is required to commence the capital project process for Treasury Board approval. Alternatively, it could also expand upon the 17 Wing model of a fourth childcare

⁷⁶Department of National Defence. *Parameters 4 Practice . . .*, 5.

category. It was actually advertised as an interim solution during a recent house-hunting trip.⁷⁷

⁷⁷At the time of writing, the author of this paper conducted a house-hunting trip to Winnipeg as part of his post-Joint Command and Staff Program posting relocation.

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