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ORGANISATIONAL DIVERSITY AND THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

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AIM

1. This service paper will reflect on the concept of organisational diversity and how it can be applied to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Is it feasible to recruit people and to structure the CAF in a manner that truly and accurately reflects the makeup and cultural norms of a democratic society? The intent of this paper is not to derive a definitive conclusion to this complex question. Rather, it will look at some of the key factors influencing the CAF's demographic composition and provide recommendations on areas of focus to enhance our ability to recruit and employ people throughout Canada's multicultural society.

INTRODUCTION

2. Organisational diversity has been a hot-button topic in North American society for the past few years. The CAF, similar to most organisations, is adapting to the changing narrative on how to incorporate fair organisational practices with regard to ethnocultural and gender-based diversity. This is a significant departure from the traditional ways that not only the CAF, but the vast majorities of armed forces have been structured in the past. Can the CAF be structured in a way to mirror the demographic composition of Canada and remain an effective fighting force? Ensuring that the CAF reaches the entire demographic composition of Canada is not only a matter of necessity, as limiting our potential applicant pool would not allow us to have a sustainable force to meet our objectives, but because it is an effective force multiplier.

3. The two main aspects that should be looked at are: representative recruiting of the Canadian population and operational effectiveness of a diverse workforce. Before attempting to conclude on these, it is important to delve into the meaning of operational diversity for the CAF and what the organisation should strive to achieve in terms of diversity goals. Following that, I will be looking at the demographic canvas of our nation to see how feasible it is to attract

applicants from the multitude of communities within Canada. Then, I will look at potential effects on operations and organisational effectiveness of having a workforce that is reflective of Canadian society.

DISCUSSION

Defining Operational Diversity for the CAF

4. Diversity in its most basic form is defined as “the inclusion of different types of people (such as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization.”¹ Building on this definition, the Government of Canada enacted the Employment Equity act to not only promote workplace diversity, but to achieve workplace equality. The act designates four types, or group, of people for which federal jurisdiction employers must implement special measures to accommodate; which includes positive hiring policies.² The four groups are: Aboriginals, members of visible minorities, person with disabilities, and women.³

5. As a federal entity, the CAF is much in line with the government’s vision of workplace diversity. Our new defence policy (SSE) explicitly states that: “the Canadian Armed Forces must reflect the diversity of the county we defend. We need a military that looks like Canada.”⁴ This is further defined with the establishment of specific goals and target, such as having 25 percent of women by 2026 and having an increase focus on recruitment of underrepresented groups within the CAF. In May 2018, the Chief of the Defense Staff (CDS) and the Deputy Minister (DM) also

¹ Merriam-Webster. "Diversity" accessed 10 October 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diversity>.

² Canada. Justice Canada. "Employment Equity Act (S.C. 1995, c. 44), Part I - Employment Equity, Section 5" Ottawa: Justice Canada, 2018.

³ Canada. Justice Canada. "Employment Equity Act (S.C. 1995, c. 44), Section 2-3." Ottawa: Justice Canada, 2018.

⁴ Canada. Department of National Defence. Strong, secure, engaged - Canada's defence policy. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017. p. 20

included (as a constraint) these objectives in OPERATION GENERATION, which is aimed at tackling our personnel intake issues.⁵

6. Aside from simply following legislation, it is important to understand what the operational value is in having a workforce that is representative of the overall Canadian population. As referenced above, it is part of the Defence policy to have a force that looks like Canada. I would argue that it is even more important that we have a force that not only looks, but thinks and feels like Canada. This is an important distinction to make because many of the operational benefits of having a diverse workforce come not only by having a representation of how people look (i.e.: gender and race) but how people live. This includes factors such as socioeconomic status, education, work experience, experiences abroad, languages, etc.

7. One of the values of recruiting from a diverse base is to enhance the odds of enrolling enough personnel. However, diversity should not be seen as only a way to reach more applicants, but primarily as an operational force multiplier. In order to achieve our objectives, having a force composed of people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, talents, traits and interests is not only preferred, but required. Again, this aim of achieving representative diversity should not be limited to ethnicity and gender but rather the diversity under people's skin. This is not discounting the fact that both gender and ethnocultural differences have a significant link with other diversity factors.⁶ Thus, it is important to have a look at the demographic landscape of Canada to steer our organisation towards ensuring representativeness of the Canadian population.

⁵ Canada. Department of National Defence. JOINT CDS/DM DIRECTIVE: OPERATION GENERATION. Ottawa: DND Canada, 2018. p. 5

⁶ Klaus Desmet, Ignacio Ortuño-Ortín, Romain Wacziarg. "Culture, Ethnicity, and Diversity," American Economic Review, vol 107(9) (2017). p. 26

The Canadian Demographic Landscape

8. The Canadian demographic landscape has been evolving rapidly for the past 25 years. Especially through immigration and the densification of the population in the larger urban areas. For example, looking at the datasets from the 2016 Statistics Canada census, there are now more Canadians with a mother tongue different than our official languages than French speaking Canadians. There are also more Canadian citizens born outside Canada than the population of every province except Ontario, which represents about 20% of the overall population.⁷ Again, looking at the census data, the country of origin of most of the immigrant population are: Philippines, India, China, Iran, and Pakistan. All countries with significant ethnocultural differences when compared to each other and to traditional Canadian cultural norms.

9. This evolving demography will most certainly shift many of our current paradigms in the future. This includes potential impacts on how Canadians view the dynamic of our official languages and which groups are considered to be visible minorities. The CAF has a passive role in this; it is not our role, nor are we equipped to influence the construct of the Canadian population. Rather, we are simply in a position of steering our institution the best we can so that it can not only be a representation of Canadian society, but achieve operational success as one of Canada's most respected institution. That being said, it is important to look at the key challenges of attempting to shape the CAF towards being representative of the Canadian population.

Challenges with Aligning to the Changing Demography

10. The first main challenge is based on history and geography. Traditionally, the bulk of the recruitment pool from the CAF has been in rural or small urban area. In contrast, the vast majority of immigrants settle in large metropolitan centres where the CAF always had issues

⁷ Canada. Statistics Canada. "Data Products, 2016 Census", accessed 11 October 2018. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/index-eng.cfm>.

recruiting effectively. This problematic is further amplified by a tendency of some immigrant communities of enclaving themselves, which has a side effect of diminishing their interests of matters and institutions not directly linked with their community.⁸ In turn, this results in increased hardship for the CAF to tap into the largest recruitment pools in the country.

11. Another set of key challenges are the perceived relevance of the CAF from first and second generation immigrants and the CAF's proximity to those segments of the population. There is a significant difference on how immigrants from Asia and Africa perceived the CAF, or armed forces in general, vice population of European descent; there is a cultural stigma attached to being member of a military force. This aspect is strongly linked to the concept of integration and how immigrants fit within the overall Canadian cultural identity. Again, the CAF cannot actively influence this, but rather has to be reactive to how segments of the population feel about the CAF to develop effective recruiting strategies.

12. It is important to note that this problem of perceived relevance is not entirely attached to immigration; it is also tied to generational factors. The CAF's perceived relevance and visibility is practically non-existent in younger segment of the population; that very segment that has traditionally been the main target for recruitment (18-24 years old).⁹ Overall, only 26% of the population in 2018 reported having seen, read or heard something about the CAF. Of that 26%, only 7% mentioned that it was related to recruitment or advertising for employment while 19% mentioned topics with a negative connotation for the CAF.¹⁰ As a country with no apparent challenge to our sovereignty and security related roles such as border control, policing, counter-terrorism and intelligence provided by other organisations (recognizing that we have a

⁸ Jung, Hans. "Can the Canadian Forces Reflect Canadian Society?" Canadian Military Journal. Vol. 8 No. 3 Autumn 2007. p. 30.

⁹ Canada. Department of National Defence. Views of the Canadian Armed Forces 2018 Tracking Study – Research Report. Earncliffe Strategy Group, 2018. p. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 14.

participative role), there is very little requirements for the average Canadian to even think about the CAF. Furthermore, our domestic role is very limited and largely irrelevant to people living in large urban areas. Also, the public's interest in our international operations is primarily related to how they relate to the geopolitical aspect (e.g.: nature of the conflict, affected county). It befalls on us to promote what we do to Canadians.

The Means to Attract Diversity

13. There are two facets to attracting diverse recruits to the CAF: appealing to segments of the population and recruiting individuals. Despite having issues with our recruitment processes and policies, which OP GENERATION is aiming to solve, we most definitely can claim to have a sound recruitment system that is fair and impartial. There are no discriminatory barrier of entry other than mental aptitude, physical and medical fitness, and prior conduct (i.e.: security screening). According to the Management Study Guide, the “best way to recruit a diverse team is to have blind resumes where except for the qualifications of the candidate, nothing else is visible”. This would be hard to achieve effectively in a military context. However, our recruiting system is very close to that unbiased ideal.¹¹

14. Appeal, or visibility, is the crux of our issue related to diversity recruiting. It is not only a matter of being seen by the population but being seen as attractive by the population. Typical visibility activities such as being actively present on social media platforms, running advertisement campaigns, and participating in job faire type activities do help increase our visibility to the population. However, based on the low and declining visibility statistics reported in the 2016 census and in the annual CAF visibility survey, we seem to be unable to demonstrate

¹¹ Management Study Guide. “Recruiting a Diverse Team”, accessed 12 October 2018. <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/recruiting-diverse-team.htm>.

to the population at large that the CAF is both relevant to Canada and an interesting employment opportunity.¹²¹³

15. When combining ethnocultural factors, generational factors, political factors and economic factors, the task of appealing to every cultural groups and subgroups is seemingly impossible. People join the CAF for a diverse set of reasons, and those reasons have changed over time. There was even a time where some people joined as an option given to avoid prison sentences. Nowadays, people join the CAF either because it offers interesting career options, a stable employment opportunity with good benefits, the promise for adventurous challenges, or simply because they have a desire to serve our nation. Thus, if we wish to recruit people with diverse backgrounds, traits, skills, and affinities, we have to offer a diverse set of opportunities. Ensuring that we showcase all of those elements to the population will enhance our ability to reach out to a more diverse set of applicants.

16. That being said, the CAF should still be deploying all the efforts it can in appealing as much as possible to the entire Canadian population. We need to promote the fact that we are not only an employer of choice for Canadians, but a meaningful organisation that can meet the expectations of any Canadians. The conduct of specific initiatives towards a particular segment of the population should be attempted when there's an expectation that it will improve our ability to meet our recruiting objectives. Media presence and outreach initiatives such as the Basic Up TV series, Bold Eagle, Raven, Black Bear training programs, and the Women in Force Program are innovative ideas to improve our visibility, but will need to be more than a punctual push to

¹² Canada. Statistics Canada. "Data Products, 2016 Census", accessed 11 October 2018. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/index-eng.cfm>.

¹³ Canada. Department of National Defence. Views of the Canadian Armed Forces 2018 Tracking Study – Research Report. Earncliffe Strategy Group, 2018. p. 2 (Summary)

bring long term lasting results. These programs should be supported by performance measures to ensure a proper utilisation of resources.

17. We should also refrain as much as possible to define specific employment equity targets as a centerpiece of our diversity strategy. Being a societal contentious issue, we want to avoid indirectly contributing to the narrative that diversity is only about gender and race. Also, as the demographic profile of Canada is rapidly evolving, the current paradigms defining who is considered part of a visible minority group will change. We should avoid entrenching ourselves in current definitions in order to have a flexible and lasting strategy. Furthermore, it is somewhat easy to mistakenly promote the idea that maintaining a meritocratic system, is not possible when implementing a diversity strategy. Both of these concepts can and should be complementary. Tiffany Jana, author and doctor in organizational leadership says it best: “if diversity is considered alongside merit, that’s when human potential is ignited.”¹⁴

Effect of Diversity on Operational Effectiveness

18. The other aspect of having a diverse force representing Canadian demography is its impact on organisational effectiveness. Obvious advantages in having a diverse force are centered mostly in generating multiple perspectives, ideas and capabilities to enable or enhance opportunities leading to operational success. The CAF, similar to how professional militaries have been operating throughout history, aims in having high level of morale and group cohesion in order to achieve its mission. It can be argued that too much diversity can be detrimental to group cohesion; this is a much debated topic in many countries. However, the CAF has a significant advantage when compared to the rest of society: we have a well-defined and well implemented ethos that we ingrain to our members by a professional and effective period of

¹⁴ Quora. “Is a Meritocracy more important than Diversity”, accessed 10 October 2018. <https://www.quora.com/Is-a-Meritocracy-more-important-than-Diversity>.

socialisation and through continuous professional development. The seriousness at which we commit to these tasks will ensure that any negative impact on group cohesion arising from personnel having differing or conflicting, cultural norms and values will be mitigated. For cohesion to thrive in a group formed of diverse people a common set of values must be prioritized; in our case the CAF Code of Values and Ethics must both have primacy over other set of values and be embraced by our members.

CONCLUSION

19. As an answer to both elements of the question, I would first conclude that while it is possible to increase our reach across the spectrum of Canada's demography, that it would not be possible to achieve a true proportional representation. I would also add that aiming for proportional representation is both misguided and impractical. It is much more important to focus on appealing to Canadians by promoting the quality of our institution and the diversity of the experiences and opportunities we offer. Secondly, I believe that regardless of the makeup and cultural norms of Canadian society, that we are able to maintain both organisational effectiveness and cohesion by properly rallying all CAF members around our ethos and core set of values.

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