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CANADIAN FORCES RECRUITING: WHERE ARE THE NUMBERS

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AIM

1. The aim of this informative service paper is to provide insight regarding internal institutional impediments such as corrosive leadership discourse and policy barriers that hinder the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) from achieving its 25 percent (%) female enrollment quotas by 2026. Counter to corrosive leadership discourse and hindering policies, the adoption of a holistic, inclusive approach focused on institutional well-being will translate to not only increased gender neutrality but will also increase the willingness of marginalized labour pools to enroll into military institutions.¹ This service paper will further demonstrate that despite sound CAF policies against harassment, sexualized behavior, and any form of discrimination, recruitment issues cannot be addressed in overarching policies alone. Recruitment initiatives must be understood and positively messaged by its institutional leaders to its members and toward the public.

INTRODUCTION

2. Despite being internationally recognized by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) over the last decade as being one of the progressive gender-neutral military institutions within the organization, the CAF continues to struggle to attain a female force representation (FFR) of no less than 25%.² Currently, female representation in the CAF is hovering around 17% contrary to formal policy changes that aim to advance gender structures of the CAF toward greater gender inclusion and equality.³ Although there has been a significant effort and persistent struggle over the preceding decade to achieve a higher level of FFR, the reality of representation still falls short of the desired benchmark. Regardless of the historical inability to meet the desired FFR, the CAF has been directed to not only attain a 25% FFR but to do so no later than 2026.⁴

3. The push toward greater FFR was grounded in the United Nations Security Council adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on *Women, Peace, and Security*. This resolution highlights that from an organizational perspective, the integration of non-discrimination, human rights, and equality for women and the vulnerable population could not be adequately addressed in an institutional context without a "50:50 gender balance."⁵ It is believed that by ensuring a 50:50 gender balance, women would be able to offer key insight and peace and security perspectives. It is further believed that by leveraging a gender balance within an organizational structure it facilitates fair progression and prospects for women within an institutional hierarchy. Equitable representation at all levels would, therefore, provide significant and meaningful opportunity for

¹ Successful female institutional representation is determined by correct quota calculations with the right set of institutional conditions. For further information see: Lisa Baldez, "The Pros and Cons of Gender Quota laws: What Happened When You Kick Men Out and Let Women in?," *Politics and Gender* 2, no. 1 (2006):102-109.

² Anita Schjoolset, "NATO and the Women: Exploring the Gender Gap in the Armed Forces." PRIO, accessed October 2, 2018. <https://www.prio.org/Projects/Project/?x=1470.PG 9-12>

³ National Defence, "The Women in Force Program, a New Canadian Armed Forces Initiative for Women," Canada.ca, May 31, 2017, accessed October 2, 2018, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2017/05/the_women_in_forceprogramanewcanadianarmedforcesinitiativeforwom.html.

⁴ Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, Ottawa: DND, 2017: pg. 12

⁵ Secretary-General, "Women, Peace, and Security," 2002, 5, accessed October 04, 2018, <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/womenpeaceandsecurity.pdf>.

women to diversely influence policy and shape the societal norms in decision-making processes at all levels.⁶ The current imbalance in FFR within the CAF hinders such possibility.

4. In order to examine why female recruitment gains remain below desired target levels, it must be recognized that institutional issues are never far removed from the broader Canadian context. Although the societal and cultural norms within the Canadian population are becoming more diverse, this diversification can conflict with the informal traditional norms of military institutions.⁷ These traditional norms are often derived from historically masculine customs that are remnant of when militaries were first created, and continue to remain resistant to change.⁸ As masculinized gender remains a core social buttress to the fabric of military institutions, when examining institutional success and failures, such as FFR, this assessment should be done through a feminist institutionalist lens.⁹ It is through this lens that we can seek to determine: “Why do institutions often reproduce or exacerbate patterns of disadvantage and discrimination, even when formally espousing ideals of equality?”¹⁰

5. To comprehend the constraints of FFR within the CAF context, this service paper will utilize a holistic approach through a feminist institutionalist lens to examine the continuation of transition from an all-male institution to one that is becoming increasingly gender balanced. Specifically, both the deliberate examination of a perceived corrosive leadership discourse and policy structure that does not adequately facilitate gender equity will be scrutinized. “The potential for, and limits of, institutional innovation and reform in pursuit of gender equality, gender justice and the promotion of women's human rights” are important factors as they influence the possibility attaining an FFR of 25%.¹¹

DISCUSSION

6. In support of a more feminist approach, the Canadian government has made a significant shift toward attaining a more balanced gender representation culminating in a declaration of the goal of 25% FFR within the CAF no later than 2026. Although there has been a renewed push for a more representative gender composition, this is not a new concept. For over a decade, a constant message of increased representation has been directed by the government in efforts to achieve a more balanced FFR; however, the CAF has fallen short of these efforts in transitioning from an all-male institution to one that is becoming increasingly gender balanced. Regardless of the recently directed FFR 25% quota, there remains significant skepticism regarding organizational change towards gender equity. The continued lack of equitable representation in achieving this policy has fostered a cultural environment that inhibits women from performing

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Statistics Canada, Population - Canada at a Glance, 2018, March 27, 2018, accessed October 05, 2018, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/12-581-x/2018000/pop-eng.htm>.

⁸ K. Dunivin, “Military Culture: Change and Continuity,” *Armed Forces Society*, 1994, 20.4, 534.

⁹ For a comprehensive understanding of Feminist Institutional Theory see: M. Kenny, “A Feminist Institutional Approach,” *Politics and Gender*, 2014, 10(4). Cambridge University Press: 679-684. doi: 10.1017/S1743923X14000488.

¹⁰ “Presenting Feminist Institutional Perspectives,” *Gender Politics at Edinburgh*, August 29, 2014, accessed October 01, 2018, <https://genderpoliticsatedinburgh.wordpress.com/2014/08/29/presenting-feminist-institutionalist-perspectives/>.

¹¹ Ibid

for fear of being perceived as pushing the female agenda, or they may feel the increased tension within the institution when advocating gender neutrality.¹²

7. The use of quotas is a frequently employed policy mechanism not only to increase female representation but it is also a mechanism that will result in an increased representation of females in higher positions within the CAF.¹³ Therefore, as female representation increases there will be a more diverse female viewpoint spread throughout all levels of the institution. This increased disbursement will result in a more balanced sense of gender neutrality as women will have more influence over the creation of new policy and norm development. Increased gender neutrality aims to foster an environment where women will be met with less overt and covert opposition within the workplace. However, due to the stagnated efforts to increase FFR within the CAF, there has been a minimal shift away from institutional norms based on traditional masculine customs towards those derived from gender equality and justice. The CAF remains firmly entrenched in the perception of political correctness. Resilient and traditional institutional values of patriotism, service, and duty have become increasingly subservient to the concept of social justice, which encompasses “measures that aim at decreasing or eliminating inequity; promoting inclusiveness of diversity; and establishing environments that are supportive of all people.”¹⁴ Unfortunately, the creation of institutional policies to address social justice concerns suffer from the undue influence of a skewed gender representation which is having a negative effect on the very policies it is trying to address: this is the key element of concern.

8. Social justice is not necessarily synonymous with gender equity and impartiality because of the imbalance of gender representation and the pervasive masculine social norms within the CAF. This notion was exemplified in comments made by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), the head of the CAF who was charged with increasing FFR to 25%, who espoused his disregard for imposing civilian standards of diversity on the CAF. The CDS contended that the CAF could not reflect the values and norms in Public Service Canada as the institutional norms of the CAF were not meant for peace but rather to kill people.¹⁵ Perhaps unwittingly, in stating his opinion, this comparison isolated women as it perpetuated a patriarchal institutional environment as his rhetoric relied on gender assumptions and inferred the civil service is soft and weak as approximately 58% of the civil service workforce is female.¹⁶ Subsequent inference, although unspoken, would be that women weaken the CAF ability to conduct profession of arms (kill). This is an old and persistent example of why gender imbalance is such a significant issue. Without an accurate accounting of the impact that these pervasive ideologies have on a genuine shift towards gender equality, there will be little if any meaningful shift towards a gender inclusive culture. The attainment of an FFR 25% will continue to be hampered.

¹² Louise Chappell, “Comparing Political Institutions: Revealing the Gendered Logic of Appropriateness,” *Politics and Gender* Cambridge Press, 2006, Vol 2: 233-235.

¹³ Georgina Waylen, “Engendering Transitions: Women’s Mobilization, Institutions, and Gender,” Oxford University Press, 2007.

¹⁴ “Social Justice Principles,” HSC PDHPE, accessed October 4, 2018, https://www.pdhpe.net/health-priorities-in-australia/how-are-priority-issues-for-australias-health-identified/identifying-priority-health-issues/social-justice-principles/#_ftn1.

¹⁵ Andrea, Lane, “Special Men: The Gendered Militarization of the Canadians Armed Forces,” *International Journal*, 72 (4, 2017), accessed October 4, 2018, doi:10.1177/0020702017741910.

¹⁶ Demographic snapshot of Canada’s Federal Public Service, 2016.

9. Despite formal and robust policies against harassment, sexualized behavior, and any form of discrimination, senior military leaders continue to perpetuate traditional masculine norms that either repel women from entering the service or devalue those who remain employed within the institution through corrosive messaging. A more recent example of this negative messaging was witnessed during a senior leadership brief when a former Canadian Forces Recruiting Group representative espoused that there was inherent value in meeting the FFR of 25% goal... as “his boss” told him so. This continued patriarchal rhetoric by key leadership does not reinforce an environment of gender neutrality; it perpetuates an “us and them” environment.

10. To remove the "us and them" mentality, it is imperative that the CAF not only meet the FFR of 25%, but it should also increase the standard by five percent to align with current quotas set by the international community.¹⁷ Although quotas increase the number of female representation, some may posit that these quotas are too high and prove difficult to attain. It must be underscored that recruitment rates of females into the CAF are increasing and that the core labour force representation among women is at 83% with a 10% difference in labour market participation rate between men and women.¹⁸ Therefore, FFR targets are attainable in the CAF. Further, adoption of quotas would not only increase the amount of female representation, but it would also ensure that there are institutional policies and applicable processes in place not only to identify but also select the most suitable candidate.¹⁹ Quotas are important, but they must be aligned with the quality of the applicant as well.

11. As quotas ensure that appropriate policies are in place that identify and select the most suitable candidate, the CAF must be judicious in its messaging by highlighting the link between gender and operational effectiveness; not just the attainment of target quotas. In doing so, it would remove the perception that women are only hired in order to meet an artificial recruitment goal vice the quality of the application, or that recruiting standards were artificially lowered to allow for the matriculation of women. If not appropriately addressed, women's authority within an institutional context will continue to be undermined, and their leadership capabilities questioned.²⁰ Sensitivity and consideration to ensure a culture of acceptance is fostered must be a priority to ensure that a balance of power will occur within the organization.

12. Disruption of a traditionally patriarchal institution through a shift in balance of power to one of a more equitable gender representation can result in backlash and non-acceptance from those who feel threatened by a perceived loss of privilege and status.²¹ The messaging by the

¹⁷ Mona Lena Krook, "Quotas for Women in Politics," Oxford University Press. October 07, 2018, accessed October 8, 2018. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/quotas-for-women-in-politics-9780195375671>.

¹⁸ Andrew Fields, Emmanuelle Bourbeau, and Martha Patterson, "Annual Review of the Labour Market, 2017. Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/75-004-M2018001>.

¹⁹ Georgina Waylen, "Engendering Transitions: Women's Mobilizations, Institutions, and Gender Outcomes." Oxford University Press (2007). IRC summons, accessed October 01, 2018.

²⁰ Women in the military continue to report that current power structures embedded in masculine norms continue to lead to their leadership capabilities being questioned and authority being minimized. For further information see: Lindy Heineken, Political Sociology, and Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, "Military Women Need to Trouble Gender Relations and Roles for Peace's Sake," *The Conversation*, September 19, 2018, accessed October 01, 2018, <http://theconversation.com/military-women-need-to-trouble-gender-relations-and-roles-for-peaces-sake-63360>.

²¹ Tiffany, Brannon, Evelyn R. Carter, Lisel Alice Murdock-Perriera, Gerald D. Higginbotham, "From Backlash to Inclusion for All: Instituting Diversity Efforts to Maximize Benefits Across Group Lines," *Social Issues and*

CAF should be one of non-biased inclusion. This can be accomplished by focusing on the value as a force multiplier that women inherently bring as competent and legitimate equals. Consequently, a more salient gender-based approach to female recruitment would focus on both quota attainment through recruitment numbers with a focus on a discourse that encourages competent and qualified women to apply for service within the CAF. This message becomes one of best fit determined by worth and merit; an essential step in correcting the gender imbalance and pervasive masculine normative values. This discourse is not only required (and missing) in CAF policy, the CAF as an institution must ensure that the messaging is espoused by all personnel. Most importantly, it is imperative for key leadership to champion this process beginning with the CDS to allow the message to permeate throughout the institution.

CONCLUSION

13. The CAF is recognized by NATO as being a progressive gender-neutral military institution; yet, the CAF continues to struggle to attain FFR quotas. To understand the underlying constraints of FFR in a CAF context, this informative service paper explored the feminist institutionalist perspective of the factors impeding the transition from an all-male institution to one that is more gender balanced. The key structural constraints to change that were considered and reviewed were perceived corrosive leadership and policy discourse. Arguably, despite robust protectionist and inclusive policies, achievement of appropriately determined quotas are impeded by a leadership discourse that continues to remain grounded in patriarchal norms. These underpinning beliefs must be addressed directly for meaningful change to occur.

14. Further, the CAF must be judicious and more proactive in its gender messaging. The links between gender and operational effectiveness must be highlighted with the same veracity and focus that is placed on recruitment quotas. This messaging approach begins a paradigm shift away from the notion that women are only hired to meet recruitment quotas and not necessarily because of their individual merit. Lastly, increased female representation is founded on internal institutional well-being. This internal well-being is grounded in policy that encompasses gender equality, equity and justice that is fully supported by a leadership cadre with the capability and intent to enact institutional commitments with veracity. If key leadership continue to fail in the promotion of inclusion and equity, the CAF will continue to be perceived as undesirable by those who feel marginalized by its social imbalance. The willingness of the marginalized labour pool to enroll into the CAF will continue to be minimal and the desired FFR negatively impacted.

RECOMMENDATION

15. It is clear that the roles women play within an institution are affected by institutional norms espoused through policy and leadership discourse. In order for the CAF to increase its employment attractiveness, it is recommended that:

- a. CAF defence policy discourse stress recruitment requirements based on competency and qualifications in an effort to market themselves as an employer of choice in order to achieve the desired FFR state; and
- b. develop and implement gender-equality training that provides senior leadership effective implementation of institutional gender-balancing strategies.

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