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MINDING THE DIVERSITY GAP: AN ASSESSMENT OF GBA+ TO CAREER MANAGEMENT POLICY IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

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Solo Flight

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INTRODUCTION

The uncertainty and lack of control with geographic stability is a major dissatisfaction with Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members. The authority for personnel management and postings in the Regular Force (RegF) resides with the Chief Military Personnel (CMP). The career managers from the Directorate of Military Careers (D Mil C) have been delegated the authority to conduct postings and are more often than not provided with the assistance from their respective Environmental, Service, and Branch advisors. Though postings are planned with good intentions, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members may at times be unhappy with the fact that they'll need to leave their current geographical location or feel that their new place of duty is unsatisfactory for their needs. Postings, particularly those involving geographic moves, are stressful, whether you are open to being geographically uprooted or not. This paper will look into the career management structure and demonstrate that a Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) assessment indicates gaps in thinking about diversity of military professionals in the CAF career management system. This gap in thinking may unintentionally create inequity among members which could potentially hinder job satisfaction and create premature releases, compounding the retention issue.

This paper will first look at the history of GBA+ and how it has been incorporated in the most recent Canadian Defence Policy. It will then explore policy model theory which will allow the reader to better understand the considerations involved prior to policies being created and implemented. This will be followed by the current policies related to D Mil C postings with the aim of identifying gaps. Finally, recommendations

will be made to the institution as to better position career managers to incorporate intersectional thinking with the CAFs diversity strategy.

GENDER BASED ANALYSIS PLUS

The earliest document of relevance on the topic of GBA+ with respect to the CAF is the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) Directive for Integrating United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 published in 2016. Focusing on the four pillars of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) initiative, it is clear the reader is immediately focussed on the word Women from the title. This is misleading as the intent isn't to solely focus on concerns related to women and girls, although they form an important portion of the diversity group.

While there are numerous linkages to issues of diversity and gender equality, the scope of the initiative is broader, calling on nations to consider the impact of armed conflict on populations at risk and acknowledge that those impacts may affect men, women, girls, and boys differently.¹

The majority of the directive is clearly focused on activities outside of Canada, that said, its intent is to be fully incorporated as a framework into the institution: “led by the SJS in close cooperation with CMP, to integrate GBA+ fully integrated into CAF operations and institutions, to the extent that such considerations are a routine part of all activities, policies, and programs across CAF operations.”²

Although GBA+ only made its way officially into the CAF very recently, it has been a commitment of the Government of Canada (GoC) for decades. It is thus important

¹ Department of National Defence, CDS Directive for Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Related Resolutions into CAF Planning and Operations (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2016), 5.

² *Ibid*, 12.

to define what GBA+ is: “GBA+ is an analytical competency used to assess the potential impacts of policies, programs, services, and other initiatives on diverse groups of women and men, taking into account gender and other identity factors.”³ More important to the definition is the mention of other identity factors, which puts the “plus” in GBA+. This is where there is a clear delineation from GBA+ being a gender issue to one that combines the intersecting identity factors that make up an individual. The identity factors that must be considered when looking at implementing policy with a GBA+ lens include age, education, language, geography, culture and income. The goal of the CDS directive is first to incorporate GBA+ into the CAF in order to enhance operational effectiveness. It also “provides direction on developing the framework to achieve the overarching goal to integrate GBA+ across the CAF: that is, to integrate GBA+ to the degree that it is always considered as an essential and integral element of all CAF activities.”⁴

The 2017 Canadian Defence Policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) reserves an entire page to GBA+, signifying the Department of National Defence (DND) commitment to leveraging the analytical tool in decision making. “The Defence team will apply GBA+ analysis to the full range of programs and services that recruit, support and care for Canadian Armed Forces personnel.”⁵ Some of the simpler initiatives outlined in *SSE* have been implemented to date and a surge of these initiatives have been seen across the institution, such as Seamless Canada. The Seamless Canada initiative once fully

³ *Ibid*, 9.

⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

⁵ Canada. Department of National Defence, “Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy,” (DND: Ottawa, 2017), 24.

functioning will answer a large portion of the stressors to due military imposed relocation.

Seamless Canada, an initiative to address some of the discrepancies between provincial and territorial policies by working with liaisons in provincial legislatures. Three major issues are health care, spousal employment and education. Access to provincially-delivered health services and to primary care providers are a priority.⁶

This paper applauds the vision of Seamless Canada but believes that it only answers the need for those members that require the specific services from that initiative and doesn't resolve the overall challenges faced by career managers.

“Most importantly, the Canadian Armed Forces must reflect the diversity of the country we defend. We need a military that looks like Canada.”⁷ Understanding the strategic goal of this statement, a quick assessment between Canada's diversity groups and CAF operating locations in Canada, is a cause for concern, specifically for career managers. Looking further at this specific initiative, there is a tremendous amount of value added for having a diverse CAF as it will provide a significant advantage, both in our employment domestically and abroad. “Building a Defence team composed of people with new perspectives and a broader range of cultural, linguistic, gender, age, and other unique attributes will contribute directly to efforts to develop a deeper understanding of our increasingly complex world.”⁸ The new perspective will also lead to increased innovation and there is no shortage for the desire of innovative ideas in the profession of

⁶ Ken Pole, “A Targeted Retention Strategy.” Canadian Army Today (Apr 16, 2020), <https://canadianarmytoday.com/a-targeted-retention-strategy/>

⁷ Canada. Department of National Defence, “Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy,” (DND: Ottawa, 2017), 11.

⁸ *Ibid*, 23.

arms of today. As a professional military, a greater representative of diversity across senior ranks will arguably bring diversity of thought, which strengthens a desire to motivate and retain diverse members.

The operational level has received a lot of focus and attention which has enabled it to move the initiatives outlined in *SSE* forward. Integrating Gender Perspectives in Operations is a key document for those employed at the operational level in order to incorporate GBA+. The Aide-Memoire ensures the integration of “gender perspectives into assessment, planning and operations improves the situational awareness of the operating environment and, by extension, improves planning and decision-making.”⁹ The aide-memoire identifies key questions each functional area of the operational planning team needs to consider in order to ensure all aspects of society is being taken into consideration. The key takeaway for this paper resides within the J2 (intelligence) cell. The J2 is mentioned specifically, as they are responsible for developing the joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment (JIPOE), also known as the white situational awareness.

Looking at the outputs from the JIPOE serves as a vital tool for decision makers at the operational level. “Did the JIPOE improve the understanding of the socio-cultural factors, including: any differences and inequalities between women, men, boys and girls both in public and private life; societal roles and expectations; and access to and control of resources.”¹⁰ Although the aide memoire was built for the operational level, the

⁹ Department of National Defence, Integrating Gender Perspectives in Operations: A Gender Aide-memoire for the Canadian Armed Forces (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2019), 7.

¹⁰ Ibid, 17.

questions raised apply to all CAF activities, even at the institutional level. So too does it have a place in career management, specifically when it comes to postings and this will be further amplified in the third part of this paper.

To date, this paper has informed the reader of the history of GBA+ within the CAF context and has provided highlights from some of the current policies. In order to better appreciate policy options, two different policy models that could be used to improve the posting issues within the CAF will be explored.

POLICY MODELS

The Walt and Gilson policy model stresses the importance of actors and places them at the center of the analysis: “We argue that the traditional focus on the content of policy neglects the other dimensions of process, actors and context which can make the difference between effective and ineffective policy choice and implementation.”¹¹ The model doesn’t neglect the importance of content but identifies its validity equal to the process and context, whereas actors are the main focus. It is clear that a large portion of *SSE*’s focus was towards its actors; in fact, more than 25 percent of the initiatives in *SSE* were focused on people, to include the members, their dependants and their collective requirements. Using the Walt and Gilson policy model, this paper will investigate the supporting factors to *SSE* in order to better understand the focus to its members.

“Developing a good understanding of the context of any policy is vital to establish where are the problems to agree on [and] what is the problem.”¹² Firstly, released in

¹¹ Gill Walt and Lucy Gilson, *Reforming the Health Sector in Developing Countries: The Central Role of Policy Analysis*. Health Policy Planning, 1994, 355.

¹² Eric Ouellet, “Policy Analysis: Walt and Gilson model.” (lecture, Canadian Forces College, Toronto, ON, 15 April 2019)

2017, *SSE* was the first Canadian Defence Policy released since the department's commitment to GBA+, whereas previous Defence Policy, such as the 2008 *Canada First Defence Strategy*, put very little emphasis on its members needs. For context, it is important to note that the period between 2008 to 2017 saw the conclusion of combat operations in Afghanistan, public attention to increases in suicides and sexual misconducts, and effects from the 1994 White Paper on Defence. Due to the force reduction plan of the 1990s, it proved critical for the CAF as there was a major gap of experienced members to replace those retiring from the CAF. "In Canada, the average age of civil servants is 44.8 years, and almost one in five (18.5%) expect to retire over the next decade."¹³ Secondly, the type of employees through generational shifts have evolved employee/employer relationships. The generation of the future - generation Y or millennials -has a higher sense of entitlement and thus, expectations about the reality of military service must be managed. That said, employment with the CAF could remain a viable option, but the CAF must be able to adapt its policies to the generation it looks to retain. Despite the concerns that millennials have a lower concern for others, Ng "suggest there is a good person-organization fit between millennials and public service, because their career desires such as work-life balance and contributing to society are not inconsistent with the rewards of public service employment."¹⁴ The final element of context relevant to the focus on people from *SSE* is diversity: "The federal government has responded with an aggressive immigration policy aimed at providing skilled workers to the Canadian economy. The result is an increasingly diverse workforce in terms of race

¹³ Eddy Ng, Charles Gossett and Richard Winter, *Millennials and Public Service Renewal: Introduction on Millennials and Public Service Motivation (PSM)*. Public Administration Quarterly, 2016, 414.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 416.

and ethnicity, requiring employer efforts to manage diversity.”¹⁵ Millennials could help in leading institutional change in this area as they have been well accustomed to a diverse Canada for several decades. The CAF must amend its image and become attractive to a more diverse demographic of society and the desires of the future generation, which SSE has recognised and initiated.

“Developing a good understanding of the Content of any policy is vital to establish where are we now.”¹⁶ The report of the Standing Committee on National Defence on Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the CAF sets a good benchmark for the objectives set by the CDS as to what the CAF was trying to achieve. “The representations of women, Indigenous peoples and visible minorities in the CAF fall well short of these 2026 targets.”¹⁷ These demographic groups had previously suffered negative consequences from having joined the CAF, including indigenous members losing their status for joining, and women enrolling only to find that certain occupations were prohibited to them. These have since been rectified, along with lifting the restrictions on homosexuality and amending policy to becoming more inclusive towards religious accommodations.¹⁸ Inclusion has become a mainstream theme in the CAF as it strives to leverage the diversity of Canada. “Diversity is about the individual. It is about the variety of unique dimensions, qualities and characteristics we all possess. Inclusion is about the collective. It is about creating a culture that strives for equity and embraces, respects,

¹⁵ Eddy Ng and Charles Gossett, *Career Choice in Canadian Public Service: An Exploration of Fit With the Millennial Generation*. Public Personnel Management, 2013, 338.

¹⁶ Eric Ouellet, “Policy Analysis: Walt and Gilson model.” (lecture, Canadian Forces College, Toronto, ON, 15 April 2019).

¹⁷ House of Commons, Standing Committee on National Defence, Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces, June 2019, 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 11.

accepts and values difference.”¹⁹ Although *SSE* has considered all aspects of the policy model, unit level policies within military careers need to be addressed in order for this initiative to succeed.

“Understanding the Process means to assess how the policy could move forward.”²⁰ When the Liberals formed a majority government in 2015, during their first mandate they created the position of Minister for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE). Although Status of Women Canada had existed before, it was an agency under another Department where it now became its own Department. The 2015 political platform “A new plan for a strong middle class” introduced more flexibility for new parents to extended parental benefits, the ability for federal employees to work from home, appointing a diverse Cabinet, implement GBA+, and legalize marijuana to name a few. All these election promises are a mix between attracting a new generation and recognizing Canada’s diversity into the public service. With this focus being driven from the current government, it was no surprise that *SSE* came into effect with the vast majority of initiatives being focused on its defence department members.

In order to address the final aspect of the Walt and Gilson model, the actors, this paper will utilize the Mitchell policy model. Mitchell provides invaluable theory on stakeholders and they compliment the actors portion of the Walt and Gilson model. Mitchell describes stakeholder as whether they are noticeable and deserve management’s attention.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 12.

²⁰ Eric Ouellet, “Policy Analysis: Walt and Gilson model.” (lecture, Canadian Forces College, Toronto, ON, 15 April 2019).

We then propose that classes of stakeholders can be identified by their possession or attributed possession of one, two, or all three of the following attributes: the stakeholder's power to influence the firm, the legitimacy of the stakeholder's relationship with the firm, and the urgency of the stakeholder's claim on the firm.²¹

When faced with posting concerns, it could be assumed that the individual member in question doesn't possess any power to influence policy. That said, if enough individuals have similar concerns and it becomes a risk to the CAF's survivability from a retention perspective, the policies in question may not be inclusive enough. "In order to clarify the term "stake," we need to differentiate between groups that have a legal, moral, or presumed claim on the firm and groups that have an ability to influence the firm's behavior, direction, process, or outcomes."²² Influence is key in this policy space, and one can argue this delves well into the legitimacy attribute of a stakeholder. Members with legitimate claims towards their posting can either gain power through their chain of command or through the urgency attribute, assuming their claim requires immediate attention. As each and every trained stakeholder stresses salience to the CAF, the policies of today need to address the needs of a diverse CAF. We will now look at the current posting policies of the CAF in order to determine if they do in fact support the initiatives of SSE.

CAREER MANAGEMENT

Through experience, it is well known that postings, with or without a geographical move are required in order to respond to the needs of the service. The needs of the service can be further understood by assigning military members to unique

²¹ Ronald Mitchell, Bradley Agle and Donna Wood, *Toward a Theory of Stakeholder Identification and Salience: Defining the Principle of Who and What Really Counts*. University of Victoria, 1997, 854.

²² Ibid, 858.

positions from the approved force structure. As the CAF is facing a deficit in the trained effective strength against its preferred manning levels in many occupations, each Command has provided further direction through a manning priorities directive to further address the needs of the service.²³ With those arcs of fire provided, career managers meet with the members they have been assigned to manage in order to conduct their annual planning cycle. This activity is often emotionally charged, as the individuals can either have a personal requirement or requirements for their dependents that they wish to be considered by their career manager. Career managers attempt to be as flexible as possible but as explained above, they are bound both by the CAF's force structure and the obligation to be fair and consistent with all members.

DOAD 5003-6 was established to assist members with individual circumstances precluding their mobility.

Personal circumstances may arise that temporarily limit a CAF member's deployability or ability to perform duties. In these circumstances, the CAF member may be given special consideration in the form of compassionate status, with or without a compassionate posting.²⁴

A compassionate status (CS) does come with career restrictions as an individual isn't deployable and non promotable. Prior to being approved, an assessment must be made to ensure that the situation is resolvable within normal posting cycle and that a position at the occupation and rank level must be vacant in the geographical location. The DOAD also allows for cost contingency moves (CCM). The main difference in a CCM from a CS is that there are no promotion restrictions but the request comes with a posting; such

²³ Department of National Defence, 2020 RCAF UNIT STAFFING PRIORITY DIRECTION (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2019).

²⁴ Department of National Defence, DAOD 5003-6, Contingency Cost Moves for Personal Reasons, Compassionate Status and Compassionate Posting (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2008).

as you can't receive a CCM (remain promotable) and remain in the same geographical location. In both cases, once the posting cycle is complete, a member may be compulsorily released from the CAF if their situation hasn't been resolved.

Surprisingly, there are very little policies specific to postings. The art is left within the hands of career managers. At times, all they'll know about their members prior to a fifteen-minute interview is the information contained on the Career Management Information System (CMIS) software. The information contained in CMIS is extremely powerful and can easily be used to match the needs of the service with the qualification and experience of a member. That said, with a focus on increasing diversity and retention, that data is simply not enough to "know" the member and it is clear there are gaps in the process.

RECOMMENDATION

Should diversity targets be attained, which could very well come from a few urban areas, the requirements from the stakeholders will be much different from what's been experienced in the past. Assuming CAF geographical locations will not change (suburban), it is vital that the CAF build a framework which will appease both the needs of the service and those of the members in order to retain a credible armed force. Every CAF geographical location is unique and provides different types of resources. Not every CAF member has the same requirements and that differentiation needs to be identified and considered.

Leveraging the work that has been completed at the operational level, it is recommended that a JIPOE type report be produced and updated annually for every CAF

geographical location and used by the career managers. Therefore, when a career manager is looking to match experience and qualification (needs of the service), the JIPOE will also ensure that the potential location is acceptable considering intersectionality (needs of the member). As stated above, CMIS is a very powerful tool but it will need to be modernised in order to capture the intersectionality data which is critical to mobility and balancing the needs of the institution with the needs and desires of the member.

CONCLUSION

From the CDS Directive on UNSCR 1325 to *SSE*, the CAF has witnessed a shift in priorities towards its people and leveraging GBA+ to better adhere to intersectional requirements. The Walt and Gilson policy model demonstrated that the context from which *SSEs* focus was towards its people was driven by high attrition, generational shift and increased immigration as a potential fighting force. The content that drove *SSEs* focus was the push towards a diverse and inclusive workforce which further provided support to the process. The actors/stakeholders are center stage in *SSE*. Although as individual CAF members, they can very well neither possess power or urgency but once a group with a legitimate claim is formed, they can easily gain the appropriate attention for change. We observed the limited policies effecting the day to day work done by career managers and conclude that their current policies do not compliment some of the *SSE* initiatives. Due to the nature of the profession of arms and its motto of service before self, career managers need a tool to increase its effectiveness while planning the annual posting cycle. Investing in a JIPOE type product for Canadian CAF bases along with modernizing CMIS, is a step in the right direction. As career managers continue to

conduct their business with the needs of the institution in mind, the situational awareness provided from the JIPOE could very well set up our members, their dependants and the CAF for success.

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