

Canadian  
Forces  
College

Collège  
des  
Forces  
Canadiennes



## THE CBC BENCHMARK

Major Caitlyn Vos

**JCSP 46**

**Service Paper**

**Disclaimer**

Opinions expressed remain those of the author and do not represent Department of National Defence or Canadian Forces policy. This paper may not be used without written permission.

© 2020 Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada,  
as represented by the Minister of National Defence.

**PCEMI 46**

**Étude militaire**

**Avertissement**

Les opinions exprimées n'engagent que leurs auteurs et ne reflètent aucunement des politiques du Ministère de la Défense nationale ou des Forces canadiennes. Ce papier ne peut être reproduit sans autorisation écrite.

© 2020 Sa Majesté la Reine du Chef du Canada,  
représentée par le ministre de la Défense nationale.



CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 46 – PCEMI 46  
2019 – 2020

SERVICE PAPER - ÉTUDE MILITAIRE

## **THE CBC BENCHMARK**

**Major Caitlyn Vos**

*“This paper was written by a candidate attending the Canadian Forces College in fulfillment of one of the requirements of the Course of Studies. The paper is a scholastic document, and thus contains facts and opinions which the author alone considered appropriate and correct for the subject. It does not necessarily reflect the policy or the opinion of any agency, including the Government of Canada and the Canadian Department of National Defence. This paper may not be released, quoted or copied, except with the express permission of the Canadian Department of National Defence.”*

Word Count: 2,214

*« La présente étude a été rédigée par un stagiaire du Collège des Forces canadiennes pour satisfaire à l'une des exigences du cours. L'étude est un document qui se rapporte au cours et contient donc des faits et des opinions que seul l'auteur considère appropriés et convenables au sujet. Elle ne reflète pas nécessairement la politique ou l'opinion d'un organisme quelconque, y compris le gouvernement du Canada et le ministère de la Défense nationale du Canada. Il est défendu de diffuser, de citer ou de reproduire cette étude sans la permission expresse du ministère de la Défense nationale. »*

Nombre de mots : 2.214

## **THE CBC BENCHMARK**

### **AIM**

1. The aim of this service paper is to provide Military Personnel Command a discussion on whether the requirement for advanced bilingualism is hindering diversity at the institutional leadership levels. The argument will confirm the requirements for bilingualism while questioning if there is too much value placed on the CBC profile (the letters representing the levels for reading, writing, and speaking respectively), unintentionally placing people who grew up outside of Canada or unilingual at a disadvantage. The desired outcome is ensuring that the actual demands for bilingualism are being met, while creating an equity of opportunity for members to get the language training required to achieve their target levels. Further areas of study could include changes to profile expiry dates, or subdivisions within the levels to allow for a more precise profile, especially if it is determined that a lower language profile would be acceptable for some types of institutional positions.

### **INTRODUCTION**

2. Officers within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are expected to achieve and maintain several professional competencies; academic degrees, professional designations, physical fitness and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle, and progression or maintenance of bilingualism in accordance with their rank and position. While all these elements are important, bilingualism has the power to stop an individual's progression if they have not achieved a high enough level.<sup>1</sup> With so much importance on second language ability, is

---

<sup>1</sup> Chief of the Defence Staff, "Regular Force General/Flag Officer and Colonel/Captain (Navy) Succession Planning," (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2009), 4.

the CAF doing enough to enable members to reach that threshold, or is the threshold acting as a barrier to diversity within the organization.

3. This paper will begin by looking at the requirements for French from the Official Languages Act (OLA), potential future operating environments, and the current language requirements for promotion at different ranks. The discussion will shift to creating diverse teams within the workplace, and if the current language policies are potentially prohibitive to achieving those goals. Last, some solutions will be presented to ensure opportunity equity among all Officers to attend language training, as well as suggestions for further areas of investigation. This topic is approached from the perspective of learning French as a second language, acknowledging there is an inherent bias.

## **DISCUSSION**

4. As a federal institution, the Department of National Defence (DND) recognizes both French and English as the languages of work.<sup>2</sup> Given the CAF recruits members nationwide, everyone should have the ability to communicate at work in the language of their choice. To be compliant with this rule, as directed by the OLA, the CAF needs to be actively working to create bilingual workspaces, embody the spirit of the requirement, and be inclusive of both languages.<sup>3</sup> It is also seen as a function of leadership, where at the institutional level, members may be communicating with a wide variety of military and civilian employees, as well as contractors or people from Other Government Departments.

---

<sup>2</sup> Minister of Justice, *Official Languages Act*, last accessed 8 October 2019, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/O-3.01/page-4.html#h-13>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

5. As evidenced by the CAF's recent deployment to Mali, there is an operational benefit to having a bilingual force. French is an official language in 29 different countries and is one of the working languages of the United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization.<sup>4</sup> As the CAF participates in existing or future peacekeeping missions, particularly in Africa, bilingual members allow for increased interoperability with other partnered nations and may also allow for easier relationship building with the population because they speak the local language.

6. The current language scoring criteria for Officer promotions accepts that there is a progression in abilities as individuals advance in rank. For example, in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), Captains will receive maximum points for a BAB language profile for promotion to Major. From Major to Lieutenant-Colonel, a BBB profile is required for five points, and for promotion to Colonel, the only accepted profile is CBC. However, to put the value of a second language profile in perspective with other recommended professional development, a BBB profile (from Major to Lieutenant-Colonel) is worth more than double the points of a post-graduate degree and five times more than a professional designation. It is even expressly stated within the selection board directions that "the maximum points awarded for a single professional competency...cannot exceed the allowable [second official language] points for the targeted profile."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Babbel Magazine, "How Many People Speak French, And Where Is It Spoken?," last modified 17 September 2019, <https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/how-many-people-speak-french-and-where-is-french-spoken/>.

<sup>5</sup> Director General Military Careers, "Review of Selection Board Scoring Criteria," (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2019), A-2/4.

7. According to the Military Second Language Training Program, the training required to achieve the A levels is 600 hours, B is another 630 hours, and C is 600-1200 hours beyond a B.<sup>6</sup> However, there is no guarantee that the individuals will reach their desired levels when tested at the end of a course. From a Departmental perspective, the CAF places the onus on the member to seek opportunities to learn and improve their second language.<sup>7</sup> Arguably, individuals who join the CAF with a strong second language ability are at a distinct advantage because they are either quickly exempt from language testing after receiving an initial profile, or require little training to achieve the advanced levels.

8. The immediate question is if the CAF should simply target recruiting to people already proficient in both official languages and provide incentives to individuals who speak more than two languages. This is potentially achievable because according to the Offices of the Commissioner of Official Languages, demand for French Immersion in schools is increasing.<sup>8</sup> Studies also show that students who already have two languages pick up a third easier, which means that first or second generation Canadians with, for example, English and Spanish, are generally faster at learning French than a unilingual

---

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Defence Academy, *Approved – Training Plan (TP) Military Second Language Training Programme (MSLTP) – Canadian Armed Forces English Curriculum (CAFEC)*, (Kingston: DND Canada, 2019), 1/7. The Training Plan for the French Curriculum is currently unavailable on the training management site.

<sup>7</sup> DAOD 5039-7, “Second Official Language Education and Training for CAF Members,” last modified 19 May 2009, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5039/5039-7-second-official-language-education-and-training-for-caf-members.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Global News, “Demand for French immersion grows as spots shrink. Here’s what’s happening,” last modified 14 February 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4922887/french-immersion-school-canada-demand-teachers/>.

person when placed in immersion.<sup>9</sup> However, availability of French Immersion is dependent on a limited number of teachers, and census data shows that while bilingualism among Canadians is expected to slightly increase for the next 17 years, spoken French as a first language will drop over the same period.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, pursuing this option may only attract a small portion of the population.

9. *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, the current Defence Policy, emphasizes encouraging more diversity within the CAF. Specifically it states “...the [CAF] must reflect the diversity of the country we defend. We need a military that looks like Canada.”<sup>11</sup> The benefits of creating diverse teams are well documented, and for the CAF, also represents an operational advantage in the same way as French. Having people integral to the organization who understand another country’s cultures, values, and languages, can enhance planning on all levels, and help create linkages within the local community upon deployment.

10. To allow for better diversification, the CAF needs to be more flexible with their language training policy. Anyone who joins the CAF must pick either French or English as their first official language, choosing the one in which they are the most fluent.

However, the interpretation of the current training policy is that the CAF will not provide language training in someone’s first official language.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, someone who joins

---

<sup>9</sup> Callie Mady, “The bilingual advantage for immigrant students in French immersion in Canada: linking advantages to contextual variables”, *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 20:3 (2017), 246, doi: 10.1080/13670050.2015.1041875.

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada, *Study: A Look at Immigration, Ethnocultural Diversity and Languages in Canada up to 2036, 2011 to 2036*, 2017, 3; Global News, “Demand for French...”

<sup>11</sup> Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy*, (Ottawa: National Defence, 2017), 20.

<sup>12</sup> DAOD 5039-7, “Second Official Language...”



with English as a second (or third, etc) language, but puts it as their first official language on their records can only receive language training for French - even if their English would benefit from extra training. This places individuals at a disadvantage during occupation training and can potentially lead to failures. This should be an easy fix, particularly when it would benefit both the individual and the institution. *Strong, Secure, Engaged* even states that when considering diversity, “[t]his includes reinforcing diversity in the identity of the Canadian Armed Forces and our doctrine, modernizing career management and all policies to support diversity and inclusion.”<sup>13</sup>

11. For those individuals mentioned above, is the requirement to speak both French and English as compulsory as someone who just has French and English. It is well documented that Colonels and above are required to have a CBC language profile,<sup>14</sup> the competencies for which are advanced in reading and oral expression. For the oral expression exam, individuals are being tested on their abilities to negotiate, navigate through sensitive situations, brief on complex theories etc.<sup>15</sup> For an individual who may already be fluent in other languages, perhaps this requirement is less applicable. Related to that scenario, is the need to be functional or advanced in a second language also more important than someone who has different competencies, such as cyber. There may be numerous institutional level jobs where there is no necessity for a CBC profile, aside from the requirements dictated by the OLA.

---

<sup>13</sup> Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy*, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Chief of the Defence Staff, “Regular Force General/Flag Officer and Colonel/Captain (Navy) Succession Planning,” (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2009), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Canadian Defence Academy, *Approved – Training Plan (TP)* ...12-19.

12. If developing advanced competency in both French and English remains a high priority, then the institution should be better enabling members to achieve the requisite profile for their rank level by providing equitable opportunities for training and testing. This may involve more flexible options for delivering French courses, such as hybrid or online instruction, or a greater quantity of in-classroom courses offered per year. For the year long language courses, additional Advanced Training List (ATL) credits may be required for the Career Managers to use. The second language credits could also be separated away from the ATL, so the credits cannot be used for non-language opportunities. This should be part of the organization's overall talent management plan where members have strategic breaks to do language training, particularly at the Captain level. By the time an Officer has reached Major they should have been given the opportunity to study and test for their BBB profile, so they have an equal prospect for advancement as their peers.

## **CONCLUSION**

13. There is a clear operational advantage to having a bilingual force, and the CAF has put in place policies to ensure compliance with the OLA as a federal institution. However, if the CAF is not providing enough opportunities to attend training and complete language testing, then the CAF is unwittingly privileging a certain part of the population at higher rank levels. After examining the existing policies and directives regarding second language, it is clear that the CAF needs to be more flexible with their interpretation of the language policies to ensure that all members have equitable opportunities to achieve the prescribed levels. While time consuming to change, doing so

will help remove some of the barriers to creating diverse teams within the higher institutional levels. This will not only achieve the goals articulated in *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, but also help to improve the levels of perceived fairness regarding second language ability.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

14. Verify positional requirements for specific language profiles. Assess the middle and higher leadership positions and honestly answer what level of language ability is necessary to do the job. If there is flexibility, the language requirement could be either downgraded or deemed open for other capabilities, which would help introduce more diverse capabilities into the institutional leadership levels.

15. Ensure equity in training opportunities for second language. Prior to being promoted to Major, every member should attend enough training to allow them to test for their BBB profile, unless they chose to opt out. That would provide a foundation for further language training, and ensure they have an equal prospect for being promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel.

16. Clarify the policy to allow individuals who enter with a first language that is not French or English the chance to become proficient in either or both, if they are not already fluent, regardless of what language they select as their first official language.

17. As further areas of study, the CAF could investigate if there would be benefits to subdividing the existing language scoring, particularly for oral expression. For example, divide the B level into three segments, B1, B2, and B3, to allow for more precision of

abilities and requirements. This may help if some positions are deemed to not need a CBC, but rather could use a CBB3, which would be arguably easier to achieve and maintain. Further, examine if there is an actual requirement why language profiles need to have a blanket expiry date of 5 years. There may be other measurements, or reasons for expiry, that would promote better continuous learning.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Babbel Magazine. "How Many People Speak French, And Where Is It Spoken?" Last modified 17 September 2019. <https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/how-many-people-speak-french-and-where-is-french-spoken/>.
- Canada. Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: National Defence, 2017.
- Canada. Director General Military Careers. "Review of Selection Board Scoring Criteria." Ottawa: DND Canada, 2019.
- Canada. Minister of Justice. *Official Languages Act*. Last accessed 8 October 2019. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/O-3.01/page-4.html#h-13>.
- Canadian Defence Academy. *Approved – Training Plan (TP) Military Second Language Training Programme (MSLTP) – Canadian Armed Forces English Curriculum (CAFEC)*. Kingston: DND Canada, 2019.
- Chief of the Defence Staff. "Regular Force General/Flag Officer and Colonel/Captain (Navy) Succession Planning." Ottawa: DND Canada, 2009.
- DAOD 5039-7. "Second Official Language Education and Training for CAF Members." Last modified 19 May 2009. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5039/5039-7-second-official-language-education-and-training-for-caf-members.html>.
- Global News. "Demand for French immersion grows as spots shrink. Here's what's happening." Last modified 14 February 2019. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4922887/french-immersion-school-canada-demand-teachers/>.
- Mady, Callie. "The bilingual advantage for immigrant students in French immersion in Canada: linking advantages to contextual variables." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 20:3 (2017). 235-251. doi: 10.1080/13670050.2015.1041875.
- McCreary, Donald R. and Defence R&D Canada. *Factors Influencing Career Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in Five Groups of Land Force Lieutenant-Colonels: A Targeted Follow-Up to the Army Climate and Culture Survey*. Toronto: Defence R&D Canada - Toronto, 2006.
- Statistics Canada. *Study: A Look at Immigration, Ethnocultural Diversity and Languages in Canada up to 2036, 2011 to 2036*. 2017.

