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Single Entity Organization: Transformational Defence Procurement Necessary for Canada

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Single Entity Organization: Transformational Defence Procurement Necessary for Canada

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SINGLE ENTITY ORGANIZATION: TRANSFORMATIONAL DEFENCE PROCUREMENT NECESSARY FOR CANADA

INTRODUCTION

Defence procurement is a complex process involving many stakeholders to ensure a nation's Armed Forces has the right equipment and capabilities at the right time for its operational commitments. Defence procurement is considered a "wicked" problem based on its complexity, stakeholders with varying perspectives, and no clear agreement on the problem definition or solution.¹ The Government of Canada (GoC) invests billions of dollars for defence procurement to ensure the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) "has the capacity to defend Canada's sovereignty and participate in missions abroad."² Therefore, it is imperative that Canada implements the most suitable model and solution to get this right.

Although several reforms have been implemented to improve Canada's defence procurement in the last 50 years, they appear to be of little success.³ Two former Assistant Deputy Ministers (Materiel) in the Department of National Defence (DND), Allan Williams and Dan Ross, have strongly advocated for transformational change for defence procurement. They suggest that Canada should place accountability and responsibility for defence procurement in a single entity, like models adopted by two Canadian allies: Australia, and the United Kingdom (UK).⁴ Canada's current multi-departmental approach

¹ Val, Morrison, "Wicked Problems and Public Policy," *National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy*, June 2013, 2.

² Canada, "First Interim Report on Defence Procurement," *Standing Senate Committee on National Finance*, June 2019, 11.

³ Kim, Nossal, "Charlie Foxtrot: Fixing Defence Procurement in Canada," *A.J. Patrick Boyer Book*, 2016, 115.

⁴ Dan Ross, "Is Defence Procurement Broken or Is This Normal?" *FrontLine Defence*, November 2013; Allan Williams, "Three Ways to Improve Defence Procurement," *Policy Options*, 01 February 2016.

to defence procurement is seen to be one of the slowest globally. It has been described by industry as complex, risky and opaque, with uncertain outcomes.⁵

This paper argues that Canada should adopt a single entity for defence procurement as its benefits would provide the CAF with the required capabilities in the most efficient and timely manner. The paper will first describe the current and unique Canadian defence procurement process and its challenges. Secondly, the paper will briefly describe the defence procurement model adopted by Australia, and the UK. Finally, the benefits of a single entity for defence procurement will be outlined including some of the challenges that will need to be addressed for a successful implementation.

CURRENT DEFENCE PROCUREMENT MODEL

Martin Auger suggests that generally, there are three globally employed defence procurement models: (1) procurement by individual armed services, (2) procurement by centralized government organizations (defence or non-defence), and (3) procurement by independent civilian corporations.⁶ The US is one of a few countries that uses the procurement by individual armed services model, however, the Secretary of Defence remains the sole point of accountability. Australia and the UK, among several other western nations have adopted procurement by a centralized government organization model. Sweden and South Africa are nations that have empowered civilian corporations for their defence procurement. However, Canada opted to implement its unique multi-departmental model since 1969. This was made based on recommendations to establish a single procurement agency for all federal departments to reduce duplication of effort and

⁵ Canada, "First Interim Report ...," 19.

⁶ Martin Auger, "Defence Procurement Organizations Worldwide: A Comparison," *Library of Parliament*, Ottawa, 28 April 2020, 5.

maximize best use of resources, equipment, and infrastructure.⁷ Canada remains the only western nation to adopt this unique model with such degree of shared responsibilities for the development and execution of complex defence acquisition.⁸

Although organizational renaming and restructuring have occurred throughout the last 50 years, the multi-departmental approach remains consistent. The current construct has been in existence since 1991 and involves three federal departments – DND, Public Service and Procurement Canada (PSPC) and Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada (ISED) – in addition to the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), each having specific roles and responsibilities in the defence procurement process.⁹ DND, as the end-user of the product or service, is charged with defining and evaluating the technical requirements; PSPC is responsible for soliciting suppliers, evaluating cost for value for money, and establishing the contract; ISED is responsible for defining the best economic benefits to Canada; and the TBS acts as the central agency to provide overall oversight and management. Although this relationship may seem straightforward, there are several challenges to this approach.

CHALLENGES OF CURRENT MODEL

The most shared challenges of defence procurement globally are cost overruns and schedule slippages. However, this is not specific to any one model, but common among all models. These shared challenges are aspects of the “wicked” nature of defence procurement which cannot be “fixed.” However, the Canadian multi-departmental

⁷ Martin Auger, “The Evolution of Defence Procurement in Canada: A Hundred-Year History,” *Library of Parliament*, Ottawa, 14 December 2020, 8.

⁸ Ian Mack, “A Single Canadian Defence Procurement Agent,” *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, December 2019, 1.

⁹ Martin Auger, “The Evolution of Defence ...,” 10-11.

approach to defence procurement does have its own unique challenges, specifically challenges of bureaucratic complexity and lack of accountability. This has led some researchers and academia to state that “Canada has the worst military procurement system in the western world.”¹⁰ Furthermore, defence industry in Canada has indicated that the current approach hampers the procurement process.¹¹

In the current approach, all departments involved have their own way of doing business and own reporting mechanisms. A significant amount of time and effort is spent bridging silos, organizational cultures, conflicting personalities, and differing policy and legislative mandates to move projects forward and through the process.¹² In addition, the different added layers of political interests and “checks and balances” to demonstrate transparency, have increased the process time and complexity resulting in delays.

Although several reforms have been tried and implemented in the last 25 years to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the process, there has been limited improvement. The most recent reform, Defence Procurement Strategy (DPS), was intended to generate more economic opportunities for Canadians and to improve the outcomes and process of the defence procurement.¹³ However, several authors maintain that DPS created new coordination and oversight levels adding more bureaucratic layers to an already complex process.¹⁴

¹⁰ Richard Shimooka, “Canada has the worst military procurement system in the western world: Shimooka in the Hill Times,” *The Hill Times*, 21 January 2019.

¹¹ Craig Stone, “A Separate Defence Procurement Agency: Will It Actually Make a Difference?,” *Canadian International Council*, February 2012, 17.

¹² Jeffrey Collins, “Liberals’ Defence Procurement Canada Is Still Worth a Look,” *The Hill Times*, 26 January 2022.

¹³ Elinor Sloan, “Something Has to Give: Why Delays Are the New Reality of Canada’s Defence Procurement Strategy,” *The School of Public Policy*, Calgary, October 2014, 5.

¹⁴ Martin Auger, “The Evolution of Defence...,” 17.

In addition, the range of ministerial points of authority in the current model diffuses accountability. There is no one minister accountable and responsible for decision-making resulting in a process that is highly risk averse and unbelievably slow.¹⁵ The lack of accountability was portrayed in two major land equipment projects – Close Combat Vehicle and Medium-Support Vehicle System. Both projects were cancelled by the government after the completion of all twelve steps of the procurement process, however, no one was held accountable for the issues resulting in the cancellation decision.¹⁶

Some argue that further reforms are needed to improve the current process, while others suggest that Canada needs to completely transform defence procurement into a single entity like Australia and the UK. Canada, Australia, and the UK are close allies in many aspects from historical past to current global and security challenges. Therefore, a better understanding of their adopted defence procurement model would serve as a good consideration for Canada in its quest to better its defence procurement process.

AUSTRALIA AND THE UK DEFENCE PROCUREMENT MODELS

Australia and the UK, among many other nations including Canada, have attempted to implement changes and conduct reforms to their defence procurement process with a goal of improving efficiency and effectiveness. However, despite these efforts, challenges still exist. Nevertheless, both Australia and the UK have decided in the last 10-20 years as part of these ongoing reforms, to adopt and implement a single entity

¹⁵ Dan Ross, "Is Defence Procurement"

¹⁶ Elinor Sloan, "Something Has To ...," 5.

for end-to-end defence procurement through a centralized government organization model.

Australia executes its defence procurement through a centralized organization called the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group (CASG). The CASG is an organization embedded within their Department of Defence and is responsible for all aspects of procurement including the acquisition, in-service support and life cycle management, and disposal activities.¹⁷ It conducts and executes all the activities from “cradle to grave.” Canada and Australia processes are similar. Both countries conduct capability-based planning to determine the actual requirements based on capability.¹⁸ Once the capability-based planning is complete, the acquisition process commences by the CASG, a similar process in Canada. After several attempts and reform to improve defence procurement in the last 50 years, this CASG centralized organization established in 2015, is the most recent evolution of defence procurement in Australia with a goal to further reduce bureaucratic issues and increase accountability.

Defence procurement in the UK is also executed by a single centralized organization – Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S). DE&S is “a bespoke trading entity, and arm’s length body of the Ministry of Defence.”¹⁹ It is responsible for equipping and supporting the UK’s Armed Forces for current and future operations through procurement of new equipment commodities and services, provision of in-service support, supply chain management, and disposal activities.²⁰

¹⁷ Martin Auger, “Defence Procurement Organizations ...,” 9.

¹⁸ Craig Stone, “Canadian-Australian Opportunities for Defence Procurement and Industry Cooperation,” *The Centre for International Governance Innovation*, No. 22, January 2014, 7.

¹⁹ United Kingdom, “Defence Equipment and Support,” last accessed 16 May 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/defence-equipment-and-support/about>

²⁰ United Kingdom, “Defence Equipment and Support: Framework Document,” *Minister Defence Equipment, Support and Technology*, May 2014, 6.

Both the models adopted by Australia and the UK are quite similar. The relationship within and with their respective Departments of Defence may be different, however, the key aspect is that both have implemented a single entity to execute defence procurement. Based on the understanding on the models adopted by two very comparable allies, Canada should leverage the lessons learnt to adopt a similar single entity organization.

WHY SHOULD CANADA ADOPT A SINGLE ENTITY MODEL?

From a comparison perspective, Canada, Australia, and the UK are long-term allies and have similarities in many aspects. Firstly, all three nations are alike in terms of political landscape. They all have the same colonial history and similar political structure based on the British empire.²¹ In addition, these nations have comparable national challenges including trade agreements, budget deficits, and global economic crisis.²² Finally, Australia was also faced with similar defence procurement challenges of bureaucratic complexity and accountability issues as Canada while employing a highly decentralized system, which led to the adoption of the current CASG construct.

From a historical perspective, Canada previously adopted a single entity for defence procurement with great success. The common themes then were based on war-time uncertainty and increased defence spending. I would suggest that Canada is currently in a similar environment (except wartime), reflected in the increased equipment requirement and defence budget outlined in *Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)*, coupled with the current security uncertainties. With this high demand for defence equipment due to

²¹ Craig Stone, “Canadian-Australian Opportunities ...,” 4.

²² *Ibid*, 5.

the emergence of new international security challenges, increased international engagements and obsolescence, a single procurement entity would prove beneficial for Canada.²³ In fact, a single entity has been advocated for, in the last ten years, by two former Assistant Deputy Ministers (Materiel), Dan Ross and Alan Williams. They have experienced first-hand the challenges of the current multi-departmental approach and have expressed the urgency for a transformational change in defence procurement. Based on their experience along with others in this area of research, the three key benefits of a single entity to defence procurement are increased accountability, improved human resources management and a more streamlined, less complex bureaucratic process.

Increased Accountability

In the current multi-departmental approach, there is no single person accountable or responsible for defence procurement decision-making. Ian Mack, Rear-Admiral (ret'd) and a previous Director General within ADM (Mat), indicated that having a single point of accountability to measure the performance of defence procurement is a considerable advantage and one compelling reason to explore a single entity model.²⁴ Furthermore, it was recommended by Michael Byers, University of British Columbia Research Chair, that the Minister of National Defence be the sole authority for defence procurement.²⁵ A 2009 Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries (CADSI) report recommended that “overall accountability for the combined responsibilities of defence

²³ Martin Auger, “The Evolution of Defence ...,” 12.

²⁴ Ian Mack, “A Single Canadian Defence ...,” 3.

²⁵ Michael Byers, “Smart Defence: A Plan for Rebuilding Canada’s Military,” *Rideau Institute, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*, June 2015, 44.

equipment and the defence industrial base should reside at the Cabinet level in one Minister.”²⁶

One minister or point of accountability would not only hold an individual accountable but would enable faster and better decision-making. A current CAF officer and ex Royal Air Force (RAF) officer shared his personal experience with defence procurement in Canada and the UK.²⁷ He indicated that in Canada, a damaged Chinook fuel tank took 24 months to repair because of lengthy disagreements among PSPC, DND and the Contractor, on the contract terms and conditions, meanwhile an aircraft was grounded. In a similar experience while employed as a RAF officer in the DE&S, repairs were completed within 3 months. This was due to DE&S leadership being empowered to take financial and contract risk to commence repairs even before a formal contract was in place, demonstrating the level of trust between the contractor and DE&S.

In addition to better and faster decision-making, a single entity would provide better “responsibility for end-to-end procurement and life-cycle aspects including: a full-life view applied to all spending decisions; ongoing standardization and continuous improvement of end-to-end policies, processes, systems and tools; effective implementation of performance management; development of appropriate support to defence industrial strategies and capabilities; consistency with wider government objectives; and better governmental oversight.”²⁸ This control and visibility would enable the DND and the GoC as a whole, to improve and implement realistic system-wide

²⁶ Defence and Security, “Improving Canadian Defence Procurement,” *Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries*, Ottawa, 2009, 24.

²⁷ Marcus Forsdyke, telephone conversation with person, 17 May 2022.

²⁸ Charles Davies, “Understanding Defence Procurement,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol.15, No. 2, 2015, 11.

performance measures with respect to cost, process, and quality. The governance and oversight of the current multi-departmental approach does not make it possible to establish such realistic measures.

From a defence industry perspective, there would be increased and improved defence industry relations. Many Canadian industry leaders have suggested that the potential advantage of a single entity model would be beneficial to Canada.²⁹ Having a single point of contact responsible for “identifying and applying key industrial capabilities to inform potential economic benefits”³⁰ would allow industry to better understand future requirements and better enable them to prioritize investment and develop defence capability when it will be required.

The GoC already established a single entity for Information Technology (IT) which can be leveraged for defence procurement. Shared Services Canada (SSC) is a government organization responsible for end-to-end acquisition and procurement, life cycle management and operation of common IT hardware and software.³¹ If this can be done for IT equipment, why not for defence equipment? A single point of accountability can be implemented if there is the desire to do so. Unless and until this convoluted and non-accountability is resolved, defence procurement would never be as effective and efficient as it potentially can be.³²

Improved Human Resources Management

The 1990s federal government budget cuts have resulted in DND and PSPC executing defence procurement in the last 20 years with a limited number of procurement

²⁹ Defence and Security, “Improving Canadian Defence ...,” 32.

³⁰ Craig Stone, “A Separate Defence ...,” 14.

³¹ Charles Davies, “Understanding Defence Procurement ...,” 13.

³² Alan Williams, “Fixing Defence Procurement,” *FrontLine Defence*, March 2014.

specialists. From my personal experience in the acquisition and support of land equipment, the limiting factor to fully execute the program continues to be the availability of sufficient procurement staff. In fact, a lack of workforce capacity to fully execute *SSE* initiatives has been identified as one of the top four issues for Mr. Troy Crosby, Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel).³³ Although there has been an urgency to hire new procurement personnel in recent years, competing departments are hiring new employees who tend to lack the knowledge and expertise necessary to deliver on governmental expectations.³⁴ Furthermore, due to potential workload differences between PSPC and the DND, these two departments hire from each other resulting in both departments “bleeding together.”

A single entity combining PSPC, DND and potentially some elements of ISED would limit this hiring competition and create a centralized pool of procurement specialists. This pool would concentrate expertise and experience, as well as increase retention through advancement and other opportunities.³⁵ In terms of talent management and training, a single entity could become a ‘Centre of Excellence’ for defence procurement. Efforts can be focused on recruitment of the right people and the provision of the best in-house training, becoming institutional experts in procurement knowledge and execution.³⁶

³³ Canada, “March 2020-Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel) Troy Crosby,” last accessed 17 May 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/transition-materials/defence-101/2020/03/defence-101/adm-mat.html>

³⁴ James Legendre, “Improving the Defence Procurement Strategy to Achieve True Value for Money,” *Joint Command and Staff Programme 46*, Canadian Forces College, 2020, 21.

³⁵ Jeffrey Collins, “Defence Procurement Canada: Opportunities and Constraints,” *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, December 2019, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

Centralization of procurement personnel would also increase cost savings and provide senior management increased flexibility, the opportunity to improve effectiveness and reduce the overall procurement timeframes. Cost savings would be realized through reduced hiring and duplication of effort. In 2006, Alan Williams conducted a preliminary analysis and estimated that annual savings of between 48 and 125 person-years or between \$4.8 and \$12.5 million would be achieved.³⁷ People are the greatest federal government resource to ensure that the DND and the CAF is able to deliver on its mandate. Therefore, significant emphasis needs to be placed on responsibly managing, supporting, and retaining them.³⁸

Streamlined Process

In the current multi-departmental approach, several departments involved result in less risk tolerance, typically more steps and longer time periods.³⁹ Therefore, the procurement process moves only as fast as the slowest of the departments involved. As different Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers participate, the process often leads to provision of collective information and presentations as well as provision of information and presentations in silos to their respective senior executives answering to different goals, cultures, and approval processes.⁴⁰ This results in various levels of oversight and time, slowing down the overall process for decision-making.

A single entity with all key governmental players working under one “umbrella” with a unified objective and mandate, would produce a more efficient process, resulting

³⁷ Alan Williams, “Fixing Defence Procurement”

³⁸ Canada, “Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy,” *Department of National Defence*, 2017, 19.

³⁹ Craig Stone, “A Separate Defence ...,” 11.

⁴⁰ Alan Williams, “Fixing Defence Procurement”

in collective synergy. In addition, a single entity would create one “touch-point” to determine the capabilities required by the CAF, identify the industrial benefits necessary, and determine the most suitable option to obtain the best value for money for Canada. For example, it would streamline and accelerate the process by reducing the duplication of effort to produce a DND specific Expenditure Authority submission and a PSPC specific Contracting Authority submission, required for the same project.⁴¹ As the 2019 First Interim Report on Defence Procurement indicates, “a single agency [entity] could simplify the complex procurement governance framework.”⁴²

SINGLE ENTITY IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The benefits of a single entity are clear as discussed above and should be a high priority and consideration. However, adopting a new single entity model from the current multi-departmental approach would not be an easy undertaking and would have its challenges. Transformational change of this magnitude would not only require considerable time but dedication and buy-in at all levels. The implementation of a single entity will take time to breakdown departmental barriers and build a functional team. The process to create such entity will require the unification and collaboration of three departments with diverse cultures, mandates, and work ethics created over the last 50 years. It will involve a complex consolidation of functions, authorities and cultures and would take years for a high functioning cohesive organization to be established.⁴³ In addition, significant political capital would need to be expended on this restructure

⁴¹ Jeffrey Collins, “Defence Procurement Canada ...,” 1.

⁴² Canada, “First Interim Report ...,” 8.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 18.

instead of focusing on more highly valued programs expected by Canadian citizens.⁴⁴

Finally, training associated with awareness and benefit of the entity will consume considerable resources to obtain the level of buy-in required to build and gain momentum.

These challenges may result in a temporary slow-down in defence procurement in the short-term until a fully functioning entity is developed. However, the long-term benefits of a single entity for defence procurement in Canada far outweigh the short-term challenges and risks.

CONCLUSION

Defence procurement is essential for a nation's security and Armed Forces. Therefore, it is important for a nation to get it right to ensure its Armed Forces are readily equipped with the right equipment. Canada defence procurement process is unique to Canada and has its specific challenges of bureaucratic complexity and lack of accountability. Although reforms have been implemented over the last 50 years to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency, there has been limited improvement. It is time for Canada to completely transform its defence procurement process and implement a similar model to those adopted by Australia and the UK.

This paper has argued that Canada should adopt a single entity for defence procurement as its benefits would provide the CAF with the required capabilities in the most efficient and timely manner. A single entity would increase accountability, improve human resources management, and establish a more streamlined process. One minister or person accountable would enable better and faster decision making, full control and visibility of the entire end-to-end process, better performance measures, and improved

⁴⁴ Ian Mack, "A Single Canadian Defence ...," 4.

industry relations. In terms of human resources management, a single entity would establish a pool of procurement specialists resulting in significant cost-savings and creating an opportunity for a 'Centre of Excellence.' In addition, a single entity would reduce duplication of effort, create a unified culture and mandate towards a collective synergy, resulting in a more streamlined process.

A transformational change of this nature would not be easy but will require commitment and dedication at all levels. There must be a willingness and desire to achieve success. Finally, it must be reminded that although a single entity would provide significant benefits to defence procurement in Canada, the common global issues of cost overruns and schedule delays may not be "fixed" due to the "wicked" nature of defence procurement.

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