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Major Stephen Piers

**Full-Time Capability From Part-Time Service:
How Understanding Reserve Force Organisational Culture Is the Key to Force Employment Models**

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Exercise Solo Flight

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FULL-TIME CAPABILITY FROM PART-TIME SERVICE: HOW UNDERSTANDING RESERVE FORCE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IS THE KEY TO FORCE EMPLOYMENT MODELS

INTRODUCTION

The 2017 Canadian defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engage* (SSE) sets out a vision for the Reserve Force in Canada that focuses on enhanced roles and capabilities to bolster the organisation within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). The policy, promoting “full-time capability through part-time service” lays out strategic guidance to bridge the gap between the characteristics of part-time service with the growing demand for full time capability within the 21st century security environment.¹ Not a new concept, since the major shift toward a permanent force centric model in the 1960’s, the CAF has consistently identified a need to re-think the Reserve Force, and its role and purpose within the larger CAF organisation. Over the decades that followed, various policies have been drafted to restructure, strengthen, and re-align the Reserves yet none of it has yielded any lasting progress.² Markedly, five years into SSE, the CAF continues to struggle to fulfil the capability gaps of the Regular Force while sustaining a balanced and healthy part-time organisation. One reason for this is the lack of understanding Reserve Force organisational culture, how it was shaped by Reserve Force history, and why

¹ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engage Canada’s Defence Policy*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), 68.

² Shawn D. Bindon, and Howard G. Coombs, “Serving the Nation’s Interest: Creating an Integrated and Agile Canadian Reserve Force,” (*Canadian Military Journal* vol. 21. No. 4. Autumn 2021), 13.

success when implementing Reserve Force employment strategy, policies, and plans are so affected by this culture.

While the Reserve Force is made up of the three services (Army, Navy, Air), Canadian Rangers, and Cadet Cadre, this essay will primarily focus on the Army Reserve as the largest of the Reserve Forces. However, several of the structure, policy, and cultural challenges can apply equally to the Reserve Forces in general. Using a historical lens, this paper aims to present an argument that to achieve the SSE vision for the Reserves an organisational model that employs, equips, and prepares the Reserves within their communities beyond the classical augmentation framework is needed. Concluding with an outline example for further consideration and discussion of what temporary full-time service might look like to bridge part-time service into full-time capability.

HISTORY & CULTURE

Academic and former professor of organisational development, Edgar Schein describes organisational culture, "...in dynamic evolutionary terms to think of culture as what the group has learned in its efforts to survive, grow, deal with external environments, and organise itself."³ The contemporary foundation of Reserve Force organisational culture begins with its relationship with the Regular Force. To truly understand this relationship, one needs to study the early history, the birth of the Militia, and the subsequent calls to arms that built the modern CAF.

³ Edgar H. Schein and Peter A. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, (Hoboken: Wiley 2016), 15.

To study history is to study change, it can teach us about the present, and can provide telling patterns as to why something is the way it is today.⁴ Part-time military service in Canada is as old as Canada itself and influences the Reserves in Canada greatly, despite the varying views and opinions on its importance and relevance

Dating back to the 1600's when the French Army withdrew from New France, a policy of *levée en masse*, in essence compulsory Militia service, was enacted to defend the colony in case of invasion while regular French forces would be re-deployed. For two hundred years this practice was maintained through the British conquest of New France while similarly, the British did the same with the withdrawal of the British army in the 1850's. By 1855, the *Federal Militia Act* was passed to maintain the territorial defence of the then Province of Canada.⁵ Confederation onward, Canada maintained a small permanent force, 'active Militia' whose primary task was to train a larger part-time force, 'sedentary Militia', setting the foundation of what would become Canada's established volunteer military culture going into the 20th century.⁶

During the outbreak of World War I (WW I), a large volunteer force was mobilised including the stand-up of hundreds of infantry and supporting battalions across Canada. The cost of WW I to Canada's economy was significant, resulting in a return to the practice of a small permanent force with a large part-time force. The onset of the Second World War saw another

⁴ The forward for a career in History, Undergraduate Program on "Why should you study history?" Department of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison <https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/history-careers/why-history/>.

⁵ Corinne McDonald, "History" in *The Canadian Armed Forces: The Role of the Reserves*, Ottawa: Government of Canada Publications, 1999, <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection-R/LoPBdP/BP/prb9911-e.htm>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

mass mobilization of Canada's military growing from a small permanent force of 10,000 to over 800,000 between 1939-1945. Full mobilisation took several years of training and drew heavily from Militia units and the Canadian population. This period from 1900 to 1950 also marks an important time in the Reserve organisational culture in Canada. A great deal of the individual unit history was earned during this period, shaping the traditions, culture, and sense of ownership for the defence of Canada by the communities these units serve. This 'esprit de corps' continues today as an important ingredient that drives Reservists to join, train, and volunteer for substantial periods, representing their units and community for expeditionary and domestic operations. With the recent war in Afghanistan many of these Reserve units have added another chapter to its history, reinforcing its place and value.

By the late 1950's the shifting global security environment toward nuclear threats led strategists to rethink how to structure the CAF. The conventional argument for mass mobilisation through a strong Reserve Force was deemed obsolete in an era of nuclear proliferation.⁷ The Reserve would be assigned domestic tasks of national survival and civil defence. As former Minister of National Defence, David Pratt writes about the history of the Army Reserves, "[f]or the first time in a period of relative peace, the focus permanently shifted from the Militia to the Regular Forces."⁸ By the 1970's, the Reserve Force was firmly characterised as 'Forces in being'.⁹ In other words the Reserves were now supported through an assigned state of readiness,

⁷ David Pratt, "Canada's Citizen Soldiers: A Discussion Paper," (Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute and Canadian International Council, March 2011), 19.

⁸ *Ibid*, 19

⁹ Department of National Defence, *White Paper on Defence*. (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971), 45.

by whom and how ‘ready’ would be defined largely controlled by Regular Force priorities and funding.¹⁰ Thus, begins a shift to the ‘Total Force’ concept, now under a Regular Force command the Reserves set out on a new era of self-preservation defence politics, lobbying for its place in the CAF at home and abroad. This friction further intensified by the massive contraction the CAF was experiencing. By the 1980’s the Regular Force was competing for scarce resources to meet the assigned commitments of the period.¹¹ Forming an environmental reality that orchestrated added dissention between the two organisations. Nonetheless, this Total Force concept set in motion three decades of Reserve neglect that negatively impacted the cultural mind-set of Reserve leadership, increasing the divide of an organisation already naturally premised with a ‘we’-‘them’ mindset.¹² This era of mistrust took a generation of service to overcome.

TOTAL FORCE BEYOND 2000

The pressing issue of trust between the Regular and Reserve Force was formally recognised by year 2000 with the issuance of ministerial direction known as the Land Forces Reserve Restructure (LFRR). LFRR helped achieve substantial gains in areas like conditions of service through enhanced policies of employment opportunities, remuneration, and benefits. However, the operational value of the Reserves, during operations in the former Yugoslavia

¹⁰ Joints Chiefs of Staff, *Department of Defence Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, JP 1-02 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 March 1994), 152.

¹¹ “The Dark Years of the Canadian Forces – Part 2,” YouTube video, 12:53, posted by “canmildoc,” 6 February 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hha91X0cojI>.

¹² David Pratt, “Canada’s Citizen Soldiers”, 11.

followed by Afghanistan undoubtedly added weight in the minds of Regular Force senior leadership.¹³ On average the Militia was providing 20% of the deployed augmentation to the oversee missions along with filling hundreds of garrison positions across Canada for an overstretched Regular Force.¹⁴

Further, as noted in the Auditor General of Canada's 2016 report on the Canadian Army Reserve, of the 158 Canadian soldiers who died during the Afghanistan campaign, 16 were reservists.¹⁵ By 2006 with the CAF more vigorously participating in combat operations, with the increasing 'in theater' death and injury rates, the disparity on a wide range of policies between the Regular and Reserve Force was rapidly being exposed. A significant push was seen, along with other allied militaries, to adopt policies that handle the mobilisation of both Reservists and Regular Forces similarly. As Professor Richard Weitz in an essay on the subject writes, "...harmonizing their organizational structures, compensation packages, and rules and regulations—as they link the two components more tightly."¹⁶ Although the Militia 'old guard' was still very concerned with Regular Force perception, treatment and direction things were going, the value of a strong, well trained Reserve Force was not lost on Regular Force senior leadership.

¹³ John English, "The Role of the Militia in Today's Canadian Forces," (Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute and Canadian International Council, September 2011), 2.

¹⁴ Sean Collett, "Leadership Issues Facing Army Reserve Leaders in Total Force Transformation," Master's thesis, Royal Roads University, 2006, 13.

¹⁵ Canada, Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report 5 – Canadian Army Reserve – National Defence*, (Spring Report 2016), 5.3.

¹⁶ Richard Weitz, *The Reserve Policies of Nations: A Comparative Analysis*, (Strategic Studies Institute, September 2007), viii.

Despite significant steps forward in modernising the Reserves, there remains fundamental issues in the ‘Total Force’ concept from the perspective of purpose, training, and employment. For example, the characteristics of Reserve organisational culture do not align with the over simplistic approach to ‘plug holes’ in the Regular Force, using Regular Force policies. A blind truth in Regular-Reserve Force relations is that the Reserve deployment success of 20% over the last three decades has been both a hinderance as it has a strength in shaping senior leadership’s respective minds. In that only a small fraction of Reservists chooses to deploy based on the current terms and conditions set by the Regular Force.¹⁷ Yet the number the Regular Force is so eager to increase to, is limited by their lack of understanding of where these Reservists come from and the extent of their personal circumstances and sacrifices to serve.

The dichotomy that exists within the ranks of the Reserves forms a large part of its contemporary organisational culture. This division includes those who have done full-time service as part-time soldiers and those who have not. The 20% plus deployment rate in many cases relies on the few not the many. Within a typical Army Reserve unit only a small segment of those members tends to deploy and many of those same members who do, also tend to do repeat deployments. Deploying as a Reservist both internationally and domestically is not easy on the individual. Even in the United States (US), a country that affords some of the best Reserve Force job protection legislation, through the *Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment*

¹⁷ Daniel Doran, “Reports of the Auditor General of Canada – Canadian Army Reserve: The Missing Link.” *Canadian Military Journal* vol. 17, no. 4 (autumn 2017): 69.

Rights Act (USERRA), has shown to have its limitations.¹⁸ Well described by a 28-year US Army Reserve Colonel Eric Rahman, during an interview in 2021 while discussing his career:

... one of the most difficult things [about being a Reservist] is that balance between your civilian career, your military career, and your family life, ... the three are never in balance, ... I've been laid off from a civilian job three times... which are directly related to my military service, ...while USERRA has protections out there for Reservists, ... protections will keep your job but certainly aren't going to help you when you are up for [civilian] promotion and because you were gone, they gave it to someone else...¹⁹

In the Canadian Reserves, deployments are generally seen as a privilege and therefore individual Reservists must work beyond the 'standard readiness plan' to ensure they have all the necessary qualifications. Many never get there. That is not to say more Reservists would not volunteer for longer service rather it is that the current framework to serve at length does not line up with what a Reserve formation can contractually offer, nor guarantee. A Reservist assumes career risk when they attempt to deploy with their civilian employer despite protection legislation. In the case of expeditionary missions, they must go and join a deploying Regular Force formation which usually entails leaving home and family behind well before actual deployment out of country. There is also the risk a Reservist does not make the cut or worse, the deployment is cancelled. It is these additional risks Reservists take to stall their civilian careers, suspend education, and leave families behind to ready themselves for deployment that also shape how their cultural viewpoint approaches Total Force service opportunities.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Labour, "A Guide to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act," last accessed 24 May 2022, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/userra/USERRA-Pocket-Guide>.

¹⁹ Podcast interview with Colonel Eric Rahman, "The Leaders Corner Episode 6", *Leaders Corner U.S. Army Reserve Command Pod Cast*, 07 January 2021, 5:40.

The balance of those who do not deploy continue to serve and contribute as a cohort of purely domestic part-time soldiers. As one Army Reserve Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Daniel Doran writes in a 2017 article:

The emphasis the CAF places upon the Reserves as a man- power pool for missions is sub-optimal, in that it does not reflect a real capability within the Reserves. Functionally, only a small percentage of Reservists deploy. The vast majority do not, and they simply parade as part-time soldiers for their full careers. It is unrealistic to try to shape the Reserves to be more operationally ready when, so few active members actually deploy on operations.²⁰

Yet the most recent focus to draw more capability out of the Reserves through existing mission readiness plans through “One Army” appears to reinforce a cyclical approach that will not transcend status quo.²¹ Rather addressing the crux of the Reserve prerogative to volunteer and match that with a commitment of salary and geographic familial security and access to training and equipment, in return for operational readiness will result greatly in supporting what SSE intends to achieve.

GEOGRAPHY MATTERS

A large part of Reserve Force organisational culture centers on community. Many Reservists are generally attracted to the Reserves as it affords them the flexibility to peruse both a civilian career and/or education while still training to serve their country.²² Evenings and

²⁰ Daniel Doran, “Reports of the Auditor General of Canada” 69.

²¹ Canada. Commander Canadian Army. “Canadian Army Narrative – Winter 2022.” Directorate Army Public Affairs, 2 Feb 2022.

²² Author interview with former Canadian Forces Recruiting Centre Military Career Counsellor, Major Vicki Ferg, 19 May 2022.

weekends are used to administer and conduct confirmatory skills whilst foundational training is conducted over longer periods. For most military occupations this training is integrated with the Regular Force Training Centers that rely on the augmentation of Reserve instructors in the summer months when the Reserves historically complete their foundational training. These Centres have struggled over the years to maintain augmentation staff. Partly due to the plethora of opportunities within the CAF to do all types of tasks coupled with a shrinking number of augmentation staff who are willing and able to dedicate full-time training, in many cases, far away from their homes and communities.

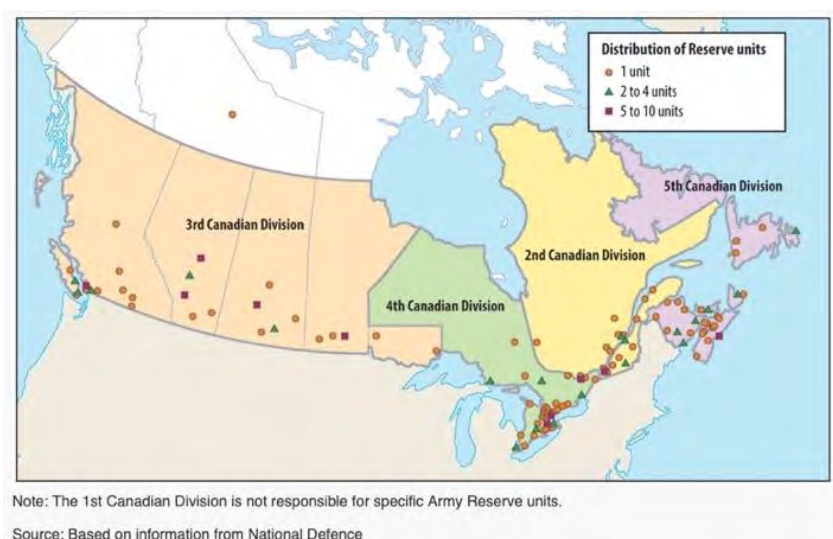


Figure 1 – Showing the distribution of Army Reserve Units across Canada. Source: Office of the Auditor General of Canada. *Report 5 – Canadian Army Reserve – National Defence*. Spring Report 2016, 5.10.

One reason for this can be attributed to the decades of divestment of military infrastructure across Canada, centralising the Regular Force establishments further away from urban population centres which houses many of the Reserve Units. This in turn has restricted the breadth of what types of localised training can be accomplished, hurting the Reserve's ability to sustain itself. As bases closed and training resources and policies centralised, success of training at home, was exchanged with mandates to train afar. These limitations faced by Reserve Soldiers

are important to understand, as a critical path of ongoing failure when reviewing force structure and policy framework from the lens of the volunteer soldier. Deeper analysis of what motivates and de-motivates citizen soldiers to serve is required, including ways to address their finite amount of time, and their personal economics. In other words, with respect to training, due to a lack of appropriate local facilities and equipment to maintain and rehearse skills, often more time and resources are spent travelling to training than are in conducting the actual training. Training Centres thousands of kilometres away, some in relative remote locations, are competing with local opportunities to attract trained seasonal staff away from their homes, and the Training Centres are often losing.



Figure 2 – Showing the distribution of Regular Force Army Bases across Canada. Source: Canadian Armed Forces <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-economic-impact/index.page>.

FULL-TIME CAPABILITY FROM PART-TIME SERVICE

One very feasible solution is to invest in a full-time Reserve generated capability: One that trains and operates to a high readiness status and is deployable. This organisation would be completely force generated from the Reserve Force and supported by the existing local

formations and Regular Force Support Staff. An example would be the stand up of a composite Multi-Role 'All Arms' Company (Coy) permanently staffed, and force generated by members of the entire Reserve Brigade. This Coy would employ multiple trades, acting in specialist roles, from within the Brigade and offer flexible periods of 'Class C' service contract. Volunteers would commit a portion of their professional career growth to serve as a full-time member affording them opportunities to fill training gaps and gain invaluable experience, they otherwise would not be able to achieve doing only part-time service. A proof of concept through the establishment of supernumerary positions on an approved table of organisation and equipment (TOE) could be flexibly achieved using existing service policy.²³ Ideally the terms of service would see a member volunteer for a minimum of 1 year with a renewal option of up to 3 years. Turnover would be important and would need to be rigorously planned for and prioritised within the Brigade to create depth and opportunity. Renewing a sense of competition within the organization and reducing opportunities from attrition.

Sensibly expanding from the creation of the Territorial Battalion Group (TBG) concept of 2006, this permanently staffed force would bolster the TBG role.²⁴ Adding additional capability to address staffing challenges faced in augmenting the Regular Force Incident Response Unit (IRU). Further, the Coy when combined with the three other Brigades under the Division would form a Battalion Group, contingent on what each of the individual Brigades could manage.

²³ Canada, National Defence, *About the Reserve Force: Types of Reserve Service and Rates of Pay*, last accessed 13 May 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/supporting-reservists-employers/about-reserve-force.html>.

²⁴ John McLearn, "Territorial Battalion Group." Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia, 26 January 2016, 2.

Training across a full spectrum of operations, the Coy would balance the need to prepare for expeditionary operations while maintain domestic operational skill sets.²⁵ Subscribing to the theory that many of the skills are transferable and as Lieutenant General retired Walter Semianiw authored in a 2002 opinion on the subject “...to train military forces for peace support operations at the expense of training for war is dangerous logic”.²⁶

More to the point this Coy concept would give the Army Reserve a purpose that would culminate a soldier’s training into a concrete opportunity to serve in an organisation resourced and equipped to produce an effect. Serving in this Coy would then become vital ground for a Brigade and its Units. This model would also serve the organisational culture of the Reservist well, providing geographically local opportunities for Reservists to commit to a period of financially secure service while residing in their community when not deployed. Civilian career risk could then be better mitigated and managed through this full-time opportunity enabling individuals and Unit leaders to career plan in ways that look to factor both civilian and military aspiration. Aligning soldiers to Coy vacancies based on the member’s goals balanced with the supervisor’s assessment and performance considerations. Recognising there are several ‘natural’ periods in a Reservists professional career where this type of commitment would be desirable. Whether in-between educational pursuits, civilian career path changes, or a hiatus period, this model provides a very practical, operationally orientated approach to offer Reservist’s full-time

²⁵ Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-008/FP-001, *Training For Land Operations*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2014), 1-2-1.

²⁶ Walter Semianiw, “Views and Opinions: Train for War and For Peace.” *Canadian Military Journal* vol. 3, no. 1 (spring 2002): 71.

service opportunities. Further, research has shown a growing trend in the emerging workforce generation as more apt to ‘job hop’ seeking numerous opportunities to gain experience as they navigate career growth.²⁷ This force employment model capitalises on this trend by offering an attractive, competitive, employment proposition over a civilian opportunity. Which in turn could also result in a component transfer to the Regular Force. Given the right priority, force planning, motivational leadership, and temperance of other activities, this Composite Coy could become a very effective, capable, and sought after. One that soldiers compete to serve in, and command look to task.

CONCLUSION

The Reserve Force has a deep-rooted history in Canada, as Pratt noted on the judiciousness of history and the Reserve Force, “[a] healthy institution is one that balances the importance of traditions with the prospect and need for change.”²⁸ When discussing any change in the Reserve Force one first needs to understand its roots as the foundation of its organizational culture is paramount. As Doran writes:

[t]he Reserves are distinct culturally from the Regular Force in the way that impacts the way Reserves think, work, and live. ... Regular Force leaders need to start with this reality as the baseline for any change, and then look to thoroughly understand these components of Reserve culture before embarking upon any strategies that ‘tinker’ with the inner workings of an institution that pre-dates its own.²⁹

²⁷ Stephanie A. Smith, *Recruitment, Retention, and Engagement of a Millennial Workforce* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019), 50.

²⁸ David Pratt, “Canada’s Citizen Soldiers: A Discussion Paper,” (Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute and Canadian International Council, March 2011), 18.

²⁹ Daniel Doran, “Reports of the Auditor General of Canada,” 71.

From this background, a new model to address the CAF's different requirements from time to time can be formulated. This essay proposes such a model for further consideration and discussion, to address the dilemmas faced when solving the complex problem of getting full time capability out of part time service. Beyond just job protection, larger issues of geography, time, compensation, training, and equipment, all come into play when debating the larger topic of purpose, opportunity, and capability.

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