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Diversity and Inclusion is the Future to Successful Canadian Forces Recruiting

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Exercise Solo Flight

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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IS THE FUTURE TO SUCCESSFUL CANADIAN FORCES RECRUITING

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has continued to fail in achieving its desired recruitment goals. This deficiency has been recognized, studied, and priority tasks assigned, but despite the efforts recruiting targets are not improving. As set out in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE), the Federal Government listed numerous initiatives to solve this recruiting problem with the goal of increasing the Regular Force by 3,500 personnel to 71,500 and the Reserve Force by 1,500 members to 30,000 soldiers¹. These goals were stated at publishing in 2017 and in the five years since there has been little progress. It would be easy to point at COVID-19 and numerous lockdowns to blame the stagnation in recruiting, but the issues go deeper. The challenges facing recruiting will be explored and how through diversity and inclusion these challenges will be overcome. Specifically, the critical SSE initiatives, “Place a new focus on recruiting and retaining under-represented populations within the Canadian Armed Forces, including, but not limited to, women, Indigenous peoples, and members of visible minorities”, will be investigated². This paper will discuss why expanding the diversity in the CAF through recruitment is not only operationally significant, but also is a necessity for future success.

In addition to the challenges of attracting new members, the present global environment and threats to security put an added pressure on the CAF to be functioning at full capacity. There is a perfect storm circling the world as multiple concerns emerge including the continued unknowns around COVID-19 with the uncertainty of further outbreaks and lock-downs, a serious

¹ Government of Canada. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: 2017., 13.

² Ibid.

risk to the economy as it deals with the fallout from the pandemic and multiple supply chain shortages, and finally, the quickly rising levels of inflation. Further to these challenges global security is threatened by the conflict in the Ukraine by Russia and other tensions with China. And finally, the most specific to our topic, are the low levels of unemployment and a cutthroat competition between employers that is creating a “war for talent”³. Arthur states, “When unemployment numbers are low, rivalry between employers for top performers is fiercer”⁴. The CAF lacks the resources to compete against many private organizations in regards to pay, but there are many benefits and incentives the CAF can use to attract potential members.

The global landscape is not the only challenge the CAF faces in recruiting as Canada is also has an aging population. McDaniel notes, “Canada is experiencing low fertility, profound changes in family life, slow population growth, population aging, and important regional differences in the pace of both population growth and population aging”⁵. The CAF traditionally seeks to recruit younger adults between the ages of 18 - 25 as this age group is often the most physically fit, tend to have more flexibility as they have yet to start a family, and prospects are attracted to the education funding opportunities. Yet, each generation also has their own set of tendencies, in 2022, the CAF’s focus will be on the Centennial cohort born after 1996. The eldest, from the Centennial generation, have graduated from school and are looking to join the workforce. This demographic is less focused on pursuing degrees and looking for jobs fresh out of high school, and different from other generations they feel when it comes to loyalty that

³ Miller, Mark. *Talent Magnet. How to Attract and Keep the Best People*. Oakland, Ca: Berrett-Koshler Publishers, 2018., 3.

⁴ Arthur, Diane. *Recruiting, Interviewing, Selecting & Orienting New Employees Sixth Edition*. USA : HarperCollins Leadership, 2019., 15.

⁵ McDaniel, Susan A., and Julia Rozanova. “Canada’s Aging Population (1986) Redux.” *Canadian Journal on Aging* 30, no. 3 (Sep 2011): 511-521., 517.

employers owe them and if they don't feel appreciated, they will move on⁶. The latter being two assets that are applicable to the CAF. It is important to have an understanding who recruiting must target in their attraction plan to ensure the correct type of messaging and platforms are used.

Today, as in the past, there are many positive reasons for joining the CAF. As discussed, the world is presently a volatile place making a career in the military more attractive. An unpredictable economy and unsecure job market makes the military an appealing choice for employment with a competitive secure wage, health and pension benefits, and numerous educational grants and incentives⁷. Further to this, as detailed in the *SSE*, the CAF is working to prioritize the welfare of their soldiers and their families. This can be demonstrated in multiple initiatives like, “to improve the resilience and health of its members”⁸ and “to improve support and services offered for military family members”⁹. There are also benefits found after a member has served in the military. Usiak found that veterans on average have higher wages compared to nonveterans with possible explanations due to the skills obtained during service or that the service acted as a screening device for future employers demonstrating a past ability for intelligence, physical health and fitness, and conduct.¹⁰ The *SSE* is also striving to ensure members are taken care of after their military careers with the imitative “To better meet the

⁶ Arthur, Diane. *Recruiting, Interviewing, Selecting & Orienting New Employees* Sixth Edition. USA : HarperCollins Leadership, 2019., 43.

⁷ Leuprecht, Christian. 2020. Review of *The Demographics of Force Generation: Recruitment, Attrition and Retention of Citizen Soldiers...* 179–200. Springer, 184.

⁸ Government of Canada. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: 2017., 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰ Usiak, Jaroslav, and Erik Gerner. n.d. “MILITARY RECRUITMENT MODEL for ARMED FORCES of SMALL STATES and MIDDLE POWERS.” Accessed November 25, 2021., 205.

needs of all retiring personnel, including the ill and injured”¹¹. Finally, one of the greatest attractions to military life is that it is a job like no other that offers adventure, unique experiences, and service to one’s country. This makes the CAF a well-rounded employer. Yet, despite this, people are uninterested in joining the CAF. McMullan reports that, “market research conducted for the Canadian Forces found that not only do the Canadian Forces have a low profile as an employer but also that only about one to five per cent of Canadians were inclined to join the armed forces”¹². If the CAF is going to grow, their public perception must change.

Despite the advantages of joining the CAF, public perception is being tainted by negative press, systematic issues, and a lack of public knowledge. Imre-Millei reports, “A lack of confidence in the CAF’s treatment of underrepresented groups is confirmed in opinion polls from the Canadian public”¹³. Further, the failures in dealing with sexual misconduct and multiple high-ranking leaders involved with scandals on the same topic has caused a public decline in confidence. There can be no denying that the sexual misconduct in the military has been extremely detrimental to both the recruitment and detainment of women in the CAF. Kirkup states, “Sexual misconduct in the military is making it difficult to recruit new members because of the Canadian Armed Forces’ tarnished reputation”¹⁴. Yet, perceptions are not all negative, as a large portion of the public lacks a CAF perception. The Earncliffe report found that “awareness of and familiarity with the CAF was generally very low, and virtually non-existent among those

¹¹ Government of Canada. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Ottawa: 2017., 31.

¹² McMullan, Kylie, Pinder Rehal, Katy Read, Judy Luo, Ashley Huating Wu, Leyland Pitt, Lisa Papania, and Colin Campbell. 2009. “Selling the Canadian Forces’ Brand to Canada’s Youth... 27 (4): 474–485., 480.

¹³ Imre-Millei, Bibora. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION TRENDS IN THE ONTARIO PRIMARY RESERVE. CIDP Gender Lab. Volume 7, Issue 1. February 2021., 2.

¹⁴ Kirkup, Kristy. 2022. Review of Misconduct in Military Affecting Recruitment. Globe and Mail, 2022.

in the younger age group”¹⁵. The targeted age groups are not seeing any messages good or bad. In fact, few had “seen, read or heard anything about the CAF”.¹⁶ With the goal of attracting new members the CAF must assume that no press is bad press, a clear message about the CAF’s purpose, successes, and member opportunities need to be voiced. The present landscape with the new increased global security unknowns should start to increase public knowledge of the CAF. The CAF needs to use this opportunity to expose their positive contributions to the country and the globe.

The answer to the CAF’s recruitment problem will be solved through attracting the full scope of the diversity within Canada’s population. The *SSE* set out the initiative to focus recruiting on “underrepresented populations within the Canadian Armed Forces, including but not limited to, women, Indigenous peoples, and members of visible minorities”¹⁷. The goals were further broken down in recent government reports to reach the following targets of 25% for women, 3.5% for Indigenous peoples, and 11.8% for visible minorities¹⁸. Yet, nearly twenty years saw little change in women in the CAF, a slight increase for Indigenous peoples, and the largest gain for visible minorities yet still missing its target¹⁹. The numerous strengths of a diverse military are well documented and include that abilities to, “help improve CAF mission planning at higher institutional levels, and assist individual units' operational effectiveness, by building

¹⁵ Earncliffe Strategy Group. 2018. Review of Views of the Canadian Armed Forces 2018 Tracking Study Executive Summary. Prepared for Department of National Defence., 2.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Government of Canada. Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy. Ottawa: 2017., 107.

¹⁸ Ombudsman, Office of the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces. 2022. “Employment Equity and Diversity in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces Report.” May 15, 2022.

¹⁹ Ibid.

intercultural awareness and improving communication skills.”²⁰ Working in a diverse environment also prepares members to serve with a mixture of partners on international operations²¹. Outside of the benefits of a diverse team there is a public perception that is attached to diversity. Leuprecht states, “If soldiers are citizens first, then the armed forces as a whole should be broadly representative of the society they serve, modelling equality of opportunity, especially in democracies that champion freedom, equality and justice”²². As stated in the *SSE*, the CAF must, “Promote diversity and inclusion as a core institutional value across the Defence team”²³. This provides legitimacy to the CAF, its members, and the public.

Diversity recruiting is not only a requirement by a necessity. As the traditional targets for the CAF are shrinking there is also a requirement for the CAF to recruit from all the diverse demographics. Leuprecht states, “As recruit pools become shallower and labor markets tighter, it is more efficient for the institution to embrace heterogeneity than to insist on homogeneous composition”²⁴. Many visible minorities are making up larger percentages of the ideal CAF recruitment ages. In discussing CAF recruiting of indigenous peoples Lavoie states, “Indigenous populations are also relatively young compared to the national average, presenting a significant opportunity for defence forces to position themselves as a prime employment opportunity for

²⁰ Mangat, Rupinder, Bessma Momani and Alistair Edgar. “Unpacking Diversity and Inclusion.” In *Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces through Diversity and Inclusion...*, 2020., 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²² Leuprecht, Christian. 2020. Review of The Demographics of Force Generation: Recruitment, Attrition and Retention of Citizen Soldiers... 179–200. Springer, 179.

²³ Government of Canada. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: 2017., 107.

²⁴ Leuprecht, Christian. 2020. Review of The Demographics of Force Generation: Recruitment, Attrition and Retention of Citizen Soldiers... 179–200. Springer, 181.

Indigenous youth.”²⁵ Recruiting for diversity is not just a good practice to cover off mandates, but is a requirement that can’t be filled any other way.

The largest demographic to observe and evaluate has been the stalled recruitment of women. According to the National Labor Market Availability in 2016 women made up 48.2% of the workforce, yet participation in the CAF has hovered around 15-16%²⁶. The recruitment of more women in the CAF has been an ongoing priority. The Land report states, “Minister Sajjan testified that the Canadian Armed Forces is aiming to increase the percentage of women in the Canadian Armed Forces by 1% per year, with a goal of reaching up to 25%”²⁷. However, with a hallowing statistic that, “27% of female CAF members surveyed reported being sexually assaulted in the course of their career”, future female members are reluctant to join²⁸. Further to this, parents, family members, mentors, and teachers are also less likely to suggest a military career to their daughters, nieces, and students when learning of these factors.

The CAF is tracking the requirement for diversity change and steps are being taken. Lang reports, “The Canadian Armed Forces will stand up a full-time team called the Recruiting and Diversity Task Force, which will be dedicated to developing, planning, and executing activities aimed at increasing diversity group levels in the Canadian Armed Forces.”²⁹ However, the question remains if this will be enough to make the change. Paxton states, “The CAF also

²⁵ Lavoie, Jayde, and Jill Barclay. 2020. “Improving the Canadian Armed Forces’ Recruitment and Retention of Indigenous People: Best Practices from the New Zealand Defence Force.”, 2.

²⁶ Canada, Employment and Social Development. 2020. “2016 Employment Equity Data Report.” www.canada.ca. November 4, 2020.

²⁷ Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence. 2017. Review of REINVESTING in the CANADIAN ARMED FORCES: A PLAN for the FUTURE. Edited by Daniel Lang and S.B. Jaffer., 74

²⁸ Lane, Andrea. Review of Women in the Canadian Force. In *Canadian Defence Policy in Theory and Practice*, edited by Thomas Juneau, Philippe Bagasse, and Srdjan Vucetic, 179–200. Springer., 358.

²⁹ Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence. 2017..., 75.

needs to determine how to create a work environment that is accepting and welcoming of differences and look to use these differences to increase operational effectiveness”³⁰. Edgar continues by stating that diversity needs to be seen in the leadership to assist diverse members into joining³¹. It is important for all members to have role models, but this may be more difficult for the CAF as it has the added challenge that recruits all start at entry level positions. In the CAF leaders are made from promotions as opposed to outside hires, therefore it will take time for visible minorities to reach the higher leadership levels”³². Still there are recent examples of role models including Harjit Sajjan, who was the first Sikh to command a CAF reserve unit and then in 2015 became Minister of Defence³³. More recently, Anita Anand is the first Canadian of Hindu background to become a federal cabinet minister and the second woman to become Minister of Defence.³⁴ This trend needs to be reinforced and continued to allow all members of the CAF to see themselves as leaders in the organization and then work toward that goal.

Although this exploration of challenges in recruiting might paint a dark portrait for the CAF there is hope on the horizon as steps are being taken through positive cultural change initiatives. New continued efforts to expose and stop sexual misconduct and make the CAF a more diverse and inclusive environment are the keys to the CAF’s future. Inclusivity will be another factor to this success. One definition of inclusion is stated, "the individual's sense of

³⁰ Mayer, Paxton. “WHAT’S IN A SOLDIER? HOW TO REBRAND THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES.” Canadian Global Affairs Institute. October 2020., 10.

³¹ Mangat, Rupinder, Bessma Momani and Alistair Edgar. “Unpacking Diversity and Inclusion.” In Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces through Diversity and Inclusion..., 2020., 12.

³² Ombudsman, Office of the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces. 2022. “Employment Equity and Diversity in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces Report.” www.canada.ca. May 15, 2022.

³³ Mangat, Rupinder, Bessma Momani and Alistair Edgar. “Unpacking Diversity and Inclusion.” In Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces through Diversity and Inclusion..., 2020., 12.

³⁴ Anita Anand | Team Trudeau.” n.d. anitaanand.liberal.ca. Accessed May 26, 2022. <https://anitaanand.liberal.ca>.

being a part of the organizational system in both the formal processes... and the informal processes.”³⁵ This includes all members feeling that they are sincerely part of the group and accepted as opposed to simply being tolerated. It is inclusivity that is going to add to a member's sense of belonging. Lieutenant-General Jennie Carignan, who is in the position of the military's chief of professional conduct and culture, said “Lack of inclusion is a major barrier to both retention and recruitment.”³⁶ Achieving inclusivity is a two-step benefit, firstly, the members themselves will enjoy their career more resulting in harder work and retention, but it will also have the secondary effect of turning every member into a recruiter to suggest a career in the CAF to their friends and family. Hlatky states, “data revealed that a positive and welcoming culture makes recruits want to stay and encourages them to recruit friends and acquaintances.”³⁷ The CAF Employment Equity Plans are working to set initiatives that will build a culture more open to diversity and equity by increasing awareness and understanding of employment equity.³⁸

In addition to the augmentation of culture change, other initiatives should be set to ensure recruiting is successful on every level. Firstly, the CAF must shed recent negative public perceptions regarding sexual misconduct scandals and other issues. Messaging needs to focus on wins and if a topic has not yet been correct then the positive steps the CAF is taking to deal with the crisis should be highlighted. Secondly, apart from strategic wide messaging on cultural change and inclusion, the recruiting elements themselves need to adjust their processes to assist

³⁵ Mangat, Rupinder, Bessma Momani and Alistair Edgar. “Unpacking Diversity and Inclusion.” In *Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces through Diversity and Inclusion...*, 2020., 8.

³⁶ Kirkup, Kristy. 2022. *Review of Misconduct in Military Affecting Recruitment*. Globe and Mail, 2022.

³⁷ Hlatky, Stéfanie von, and Bibi Imre-Millei. 2021. “A Gender-Based Analysis of Recruitment and Retention in the Canadian Army Reserve.” *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, November, 51.

³⁸ Ombudsman, Office of the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces. 2022. “Employment Equity and Diversity in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces Report.” www.canada.ca. May 15, 2022.

in recruiting from a variety of different demographic groups. Mayor states that, “An ad that includes multiple different characters (from various minority groups in different units) should be used.”³⁹ It must also be understood that a single advertisement or platform will not connect with every group. McMullan states, “In a complex society, it is unlikely that the same product or service will appeal to everyone.”⁴⁰ So different advertising methods should be used for different groups. Thirdly, proper tracking needs to be taking place to test what programs are working and what is not achieving results. A finding in the ADM (RS) 6/17 stated, “While attraction initiatives at the national and local recruitment centres exist, there is no formally documented strategic level plan to guide military recruitment.”⁴¹ Recruitment must be part of a larger plan that doesn’t solely focus on recruiting but all elements that increase positive CAF awareness to the public. Recruiting cannot be left to chance but instead as Arthur states, “recruitment initiatives with a carefully thought-out and executed balancing act between what you have done in the past with what you may have read or heard about, or perhaps what your competition is doing.”⁴² Finally, CFRG and other leaders in recruiting must be looking to the future, always one bound ahead, to the next platform the targeted audiences is or will be using. Presently, recruiting cells are focused on traditional paid advertisements, such as television and print, and also digital and social media, like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.⁴³ As the CAF targets younger adults, media plans must constantly be shifting to be at the forefront of social media changes, as the

³⁹ Mayer, Paxton. “WHAT’S IN A SOLDIER? HOW TO REBRAND THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES.” Canadian Global Affairs Institute. October 2020.

⁴⁰ McMullan, Kylie, Pinder Rehal, Katy Read, Judy Luo, Ashley Huating Wu, Leyland Pitt, Lisa Papania, and Colin Campbell. 2009. “Selling the Canadian Forces... 27 (4): 474–485., 482.

⁴¹ Defence, National. 2020. “Advisory of the Military Recruitment Process.” www.canada.ca. July 20, 2020.

⁴² Arthur, Diane. Recruiting, Interviewing, Selecting & Orienting New Employees Sixth Edition. USA : HarperCollins Leadership, 2019.

⁴³ Defence, National. 2020. “Advisory of the Military Recruitment Process.” www.canada.ca. July 20, 2020

examples above have already started to fall out of fashion with the younger generation who have turned their attention to TikTok and Snapchat.⁴⁴ All these points must be amalgamated and mutually supported to ensure the messages are received and actioned by the targeted audience. This cannot happen without a CAF wide strategic plan, open communication, and cooperation between all the direct elements responsible for recruiting.

The buck doesn't stop here as there are actions that individual leaders and each member of the CAF can do to assist in recruitment. Leaders at all levels must work toward expressing a positive culture change and demonstrate the importance of recruitment at even the lowest levels. This could be as simple as CO's emphasizing the importance of recruitment during parade nights, training exercises, and taking actions at regimental public events.⁴⁵ Hlatky states, "a key strategy for recruitment is to cultivate a strong regimental culture, conveyed by unit members to their peers, coupled with broad unit participation in recruitment, so that it is the responsibility of not just the command and recruitment teams, but the whole unit."⁴⁶ In essence, the goal of all leaders should be toward creating a culture where every soldier's secondary duty is an ambassador and recruiter for the unit and the CAF. This initiative training can be conducted for all members to assist in recruiting. Training can be completed in a Distance Learning Model, typical classroom lectures, or through small group discussion. However, for it to be successful it must be made a priority. There is no doubt that the OP HONOUR training was conducted with a

⁴⁴ Auxier, Brooke, and Monica Anderson. 2021. "Social Media Use in 2021." Pew Research Center. April 7, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/04/07/social-media-use-in-2021/>.

⁴⁵ Hlatky, Stéfanie von, and Bibi Imre-Millei. 2021. "A Gender-Based Analysis of Recruitment and Retention in the Canadian Army Reserve." *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, November., 48.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 47

ferocity that demonstrated it was a high priority. The need for recruiting is a different type of priority, but needs to be dealt with in a similar manner for it to gain the traction needed.

Finally, there are two elements of recruiting, the first is attracting new members which has been one of the main focuses of this essay. The second is the processing of new applicants. The length of time for new members to be screened was an issue identified in the *SSE* with the goal to, “Reduce significantly the time to enroll in the Canadian Armed Forces by reforming all aspects of military recruiting.”⁴⁷ This deficiency will not be explored here, but should be understood that if a significant push in recruiting is to be achieved there must be the administrative processes and resources in place to support it. The ultimate goal is to increase the size of the CAF, not to simply attract more applicants. There would be no point in pushing a recruiting campaign unless the recruitment centers can turn these new applicants into soldiers.

In conclusion, the CAF faces many uncertain challenges in its future tasks and its ability to recruit and sustain its personnel. The further the CAF falls behind its recruiting goals the more difficult it will be to reverse this trend. The positive messages of the CAF must be communicated to the nation’s population including, “demonstrating the usefulness of, and need for, the CAF”, the operations it is conducting domestically and internationally, and the benefits and advantages available to members joining the CAF.⁴⁸ By creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace the CAF will have the opportunity to recruit from the full spectrum of its population, which will set the CAF up for success in its future tasks and operations.

⁴⁷ Government of Canada. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: 2017., 107.

⁴⁸ Mayer, Paxton. “WHAT’S IN A SOLDIER? HOW TO REBRAND THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES.” Canadian Global Affairs Institute. October 2020., 6.

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