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An Institutional Analysis of the Canadian Armed Forces Policy on Remote Work**

Commander Stephanie Hartzell

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WORKING FROM HOME IN UNIFORM: AN INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES POLICY ON REMOTE WORK

INTRODUCTION

Canadians who volunteer for military service make sacrifices. Ideas such as service before self and unlimited liability form part of the professional soldier identity. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are “[...] liable to perform general military duties and common defence and security duties, not just the duties of their military occupation or occupational specification.”¹ Meaning they must, at all times, be ready to fulfill any lawful duty.² This notion is primarily associated with the ability to be ordered into harm’s way with the potential of loss of life and other hardships stemming from deployed operations. The demand for sacrifice, however, also extends to their families, finances and home life. One such example is the established requirement for frequent postings and relocations. The call for regular relocations has long been a bugbear for military personnel and their families, exacerbated today by an increasing cost of living, diminishing purchasing power, evolving Canadian values and family dynamics, and COVID-19 Pandemic. Consequently, CAF leadership recognizes geographic instability as a detriment to recruitment, work-life balance and retention.³ Considering the CAF is short almost 8000 regular force personnel, challenging the relocation paradigm is a worthy pursuit.

¹ Department of National Defence, Defence Administrative Orders and Directives (DAOD) 5023-0, *Universality of Service*, (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2006), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5023/5023-0-universality-of-service.html>, last modified 31 August 2018, para 2.4.

²National Defence Act, R.S.C., c. N-5, s. 33 (1985).

³ Department of National Defence, DRAFT *CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution* (Ottawa: Chief of the Defence Staff, n.d.), last modified 25 April 2022, 6-7, 10.

In March 2022, the CAF, through the Chief of Military Personnel, released a Canadian Forces Military Personnel Instruction (CF Mil Pers Instr) 01/22, titled *Changing a Place of Duty and the Use of Postings to Enable Remote Work Options*. It provides regular force personnel with a process for requesting and authorizing remote work.⁴ This instruction comes on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the Department of National Defence (DND), including the CAF, embraced a myriad of alternative work arrangements, including full-time work from home as a force protection measure.⁵ While Commanding Officers have long had the flexibility to support alternative work arrangements for their personnel as appropriate, the recent CF Mil Pers Instr is the first to offer Commanding Officers, Career Managers and individuals the possibility to “work from anywhere” and potentially curb the need for frequent and disruptive relocations.

While the recently promulgated CAF policy on remote work has the noble aim of enabling quality of life for its members, it risks limited adoption and adverse institutional outcomes should the CAF fail to fully consider the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that underpin institutions. Complementary policies that address barriers to its implementation, in areas such as business processes, network access, base support services and career management, must buttress the CAF’s remote work policy. Moreover, to ensure the policy’s successful implementation, institutional leadership must confront prevalent norms, values and beliefs that shape existing CAF culture but are contrary to its vision of change. To ascertain this thesis, this paper will leverage

⁴ Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Military Personnel Instruction (CF Mil Pers Instr) 01/22, *Changing a Place of Duty and the Use of Postings to Enable Remote Work Options*, (Ottawa: Chief of Military Personnel, 2022), 4.

⁵ J.H. Vance, *Letter from the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) Regarding COVID-10*, 13 March 2020.

American sociologist William R. Scott's institutional analytic framework to explore the challenges associated with the CAF's move towards remote work.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS REMOTE WORK

Before briefly considering the attitudes of military personnel and Canadians towards remote work, a definition of the term is required. Remote work has many designations, at times with slightly varied meanings, including telework, telecommuting and working from home. CF Mil Pers Instr 01/22 defines the term "remote work" as "[...] the performance of military duty at a place of duty different from the place of duty normally associated with a unit."⁶ This definition is simple and allows many flexible working arrangements to be included. It focuses on the location of work and does not prescribe time or mode-based elements. Furthermore, it encompasses the aforementioned variations in nomenclature. Consequently, this paper will employ the term remote work as described in CAF policy.

Interest in remote work is not new. However, since its inception under the digital revolution, employers have been reluctant to adopt this alternative way of work. The COVID-19 pandemic forced hesitant employers to adjust their managerial and business practices in favour of a predominantly work-from-home posture. The transition was not without growing pains, but eventually, the workforce appeared to settle into its new routine. Of the over 2,500 Canadian responses to a March 2022 Angus Reid Poll, 41% indicated that they or someone in their household are working from home – an enormous jump since 2016, when it was estimated only 4% of the Canadian workforce worked from

⁶ Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Military Personnel Instruction (CF Mil Pers Instr) 01/22, *Changing a Place of Duty and the Use of Postings to Enable Remote Work Options*, (Ottawa: Chief of Military Personnel, 2022), 3.

home.⁷ Within the CAF, instances of working from home during the pandemic were even greater than that of the Canadian public, approaching 50%.⁸ Nevertheless, as the world begins a third pandemic year, many employers appear keen to bring people back to the office. That said, the same Angus Reid Poll concluded that remote workers are hesitant to return to the office. That is, 79% of them communicated a preference to work from home full-time or as part of a hybrid model. Hybrid, implying part-time onsite in the office and part-time working from home. In a similar poll from the summer of 2021, the attitude towards returning to the workplace was much warmer, indicating that remote workers are becoming more and more established and comfortable in their new work arrangements.⁹ So much so that over half of remote workers would consider new employment if forced to return to the office, some even asserting they would immediately quit.¹⁰ Research on the advantages and disadvantages of remote work aside, it appears the Canadian public has spoken. The option for remote work is in demand and linked to retention.

CAF members' attitudes toward remote work echo those of the Canadian public. Over half of respondents to a 2019 CAF retention survey indicated "the ability to "telecommute" or work from home would increase my likelihood for [*sic*] staying in the CAF."¹¹ Additionally, of the 23.5% of CAF members who signalled an intent to release,

⁷ Angus Reid Institute. "Back to Work(place): As Employers Beckon, Telecommuters Grow More Entrenched at Home." Last accessed 30 April 2022. <https://angusreid.org/covid-19-pandemic-work-from-home-return-to-work/>.

⁸ Irina Goldenberg *et al.*, DRDC-RDDC-2020-RO84, *COVID-19 Defence Team Survey: Top-line Findings*, (Ottawa: DRDC, 2020), 7

⁹ Angus Reid Institute. "Back to Work(place): As Employers Beckon, Telecommuters Grow More Entrenched at Home." Last accessed 30 April 2022. <https://angusreid.org/covid-19-pandemic-work-from-home-return-to-work/>.

¹⁰ Angus Reid Institute. "Back to Work(place): As Employers Beckon, Telecommuters Grow More Entrenched at Home." Last accessed 30 April 2022. <https://angusreid.org/covid-19-pandemic-work-from-home-return-to-work/>

¹¹ Edward Yeung, Evanya Musolino and Emrah Eren, DRDC-RDDC-2020-C016, *The 2019 CAF Regular Force Retention Survey* (Ottawa: DRDC, 2019), 22.

lack of geographic stability was listed within the top five internal reasons for release.¹² Other, although potentially related, reasons for release included the impact of military lifestyle on a spouse or partner, the impact of military lifestyle on child or children, posting dissatisfaction and career management dissatisfaction.¹³ These results signal a clear desire for remote work within the CAF and strengthening the argument that remote work has the potential to improve retention. The demand for remote work is prevalent not only within the Canadian military but amongst many allies. Well before the pandemic, militaries in the United Kingdom, United States and Australia began chasing the perceived benefits of this flexible work arrangement.¹⁴ The question is, is CF Mil Pers Instr 01/22 enough to ensure the successful adoption of remote working arrangements and leverage the associated benefits within a change-resistant institution such as the Canadian Armed Forces?

MILITARY AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

American historian Harry E. Barnes offers a succinct definition of institutions as a “... social structure and machinery through which human society organizes, directs, and executes the multifarious activities required to satisfy human needs.”¹⁵ Barnes’ definition centers around the idea of service to society, whereas March and Olsen highlight the enduring nature of institutions with their definition,

¹² Edward Yeung, Evanya Musolino and Emrah Eren, DRDC-RDDC-2020-C016, The 2019 CAF Regular Force Retention Survey (Ottawa: DRDC, 2019), 21.

¹³ Edward Yeung, Evanya Musolino and Emrah Eren, DRDC-RDDC-2020-C016, The 2019 CAF Regular Force Retention Survey (Ottawa: DRDC, 2019), 21.

¹⁴ United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Flexible Working and You: A Guide for Service Personnel* (UK: UK MOD, 2019); Abby Cathcart, Paula McDonald, and Deanna Grant-Smith, “Challenging the Myths About Flexible Work in the ADF,” *Australian Defence Force Journal* no. 195 (2014): 55-68.; Department of Defense, Department of Defense Instruction 1035.01, *Telework Policy*, (US DoD, 2012).

¹⁵ Harry E. Barnes, *Social Institutions in an Era of World Upheaval* (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1946), 29.

... relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances.¹⁶

Amongst institutions' many characterizations, there are a number of emerging themes: organization, structure, service, society, humanity, and persistence. All of which appear prominently within the military. The military is undoubtedly a social institution. Scott submits that the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that constitute an institution are distinct yet mutually supportive pillars that enable an institution to exist and persist.¹⁷ Misalignment of the three compel change or, conversely, can stifle directed change initiatives.¹⁸ Whereas "when pillars are aligned, the strength of their combined forces can be formidable."¹⁹ Accordingly, failure to consider the peculiarities and influences of all three pillars when driving change, such as the introduction of a new policy or direction like that of remote work within the CAF, may lead to resistance, unintended secondary effects or even complete non-observance.

¹⁶ James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Elaborating the "New Institutionalism,"* in The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions (Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

¹⁷ W. Richard Scott, "Crafting an Analytic Framework I: Three Pillars of Institutions," in *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, 4th ed. (USA: Sage publications, 2013), 59.

¹⁸ W. Richard Scott, "Crafting an Analytic Framework I: Three Pillars of Institutions," in *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, 4th ed. (USA: Sage publications, 2013), 71.

¹⁹ W. Richard Scott, "Crafting an Analytic Framework I: Three Pillars of Institutions," in *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, 4th ed. (USA: Sage publications, 2013), 71.

The following sections will assess the CAF's recently promulgated policy direction on remote work against the three pillars to identify obstacles to the policy's successful implementation.

REGULATIVE PILLAR

The regulative pillar is rather intuitive in that it is relatively tangible compared to the normative and cultural-cognitive pillars. It is comprised of rules, regulations, policies and directives that regulate behaviours and activity within an institution.²⁰ Typically, although not always, they are formalized in writing and possess some form of penalty for non-compliance or reward for adherence.²¹ It appears that the CAF has led its introduction of remote work with the regulative pillar, albeit half-heartedly. Perhaps, a reflection or even acknowledgement of the conflicting norms and beliefs that remain at play within the normative and cultural-cognitive pillars of the institution.

Of course, change must start somewhere. In this case, it was the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite spawning at the start of the digital age, and the longstanding challenges posed by frequent geographic relocations on the CAF and its people, the concept of remote work was largely avoided within the CAF.²² That is, until the pandemic and the need to protect the readiness of its force, thrust the CAF towards a work from home posture since early 2020. This shift is enforced under the regulative pillar through a series of combined Deputy Minister (DM)/Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

²⁰ W. Richard Scott, "Crafting an Analytic Framework I: Three Pillars of Institutions," in *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, 4th ed. (USA: Sage publications, 2013), 59-64.

²¹ W. Richard Scott, "Crafting an Analytic Framework I: Three Pillars of Institutions," in *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, 4th ed. (USA: Sage publications, 2013), 59-64.

²² Ravi S. Gajendran and David A. Harrison, "The Good, the Bad, and the Unknown About Telecommuting: Meta-Analysis of Psychological Mediators and Individual Consequences," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92, no. 6 (2007): 1524.

Directives. Arguably, the urgency posed by the pandemic masked the need to consider the remaining two pillars. This new policy direction draws legitimacy from grander policy stemming from the government's own regulative pillar. Of note is the Canada Labour Code. In 2017 the Canada Labour Code was amended through Bill C-63 to improve employee work-life balance through a myriad of assurances, including the right to request flexible work arrangements as it pertains to hours, schedule and location of employment.²³ Policy-direction on flexible work arrangements was subsequently promulgated for federally regulated employees, albeit not applicable to military personnel.²⁴

Within DND and the CAF specifically, CF Mil Pers Instr 01/22 is propped up through Canada's Defence Policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE), where people are ranked as the number one priority. SSE emphasizes the imperative of offering flexible career paths as means of attracting and retaining personnel.²⁵ Further legitimizing the CAF's remote work policy is the joint DM/CDS *Operating and Reconstituting in a Persistent COVID-19 Environment* directive which calls on senior CAF leadership to "identify and implement additional capacity and processes for remote work" in support of CAF reconstitution efforts.²⁶ A follow-on joint DM/CDS directive for CAF reconstitution is in draft form, to be released in the upcoming months. It continues to promote the

²³ Statutes of Canada 2017, Chapter 33, Bill C-63 (2017), 255-257.

²⁴ Government of Canada, "Flexible Work Arrangements for Federally Regulated Employees," last modified 24 February 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/portfolio/labour/programs/labour-standards/flexible-work-arrangements.html>.

²⁵ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2017), 21-22.

²⁶ Government of Canada, "CDS/DM Directive on DND/CAF Operating and Reconstituting in a Persistent COVID-19 Environment," last modified 25 February 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/dm-cds-directives/cds-dm-directive-dnd-caf-operating-reconstituting-persistent-covid-19-environment.html>.

application of remote work as the CAF transitions from its pandemic force posture, highlighting a need for leadership to be adaptive in their approach to postings and succession planning.²⁷ Again here, offering remote work is viewed as means of improving retention amongst serving members.

Moreover, the instruction remains firmly in line with the existing CAF personnel management doctrine, which places operational effectiveness paramount and highlights the balance between individual wants and desires with the needs of Canada and the CAF.²⁸ Consequently, the instruction acknowledges that some roles and positions will simply not allow for remote work, as was the case during the pandemic. Search and rescue, soldiering, equipment maintenance and in-person instruction are some examples. Like personnel management doctrine, this instruction acknowledges that when it comes to people, nothing is one size fits all.²⁹ Remote work arrangements are to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking both candidate and position suitability into account. Overall, CF Mil Pers Intr 01/22 aligns with a number of higher-level policies, both federal and departmental, suggesting smooth integration of the new policy direction within the regulative pillar.

Despite overarching policy is in place to support remote work, there are other areas within this pillar worthy of attention. The CAF's direction on remote work is the elaboration of a procedure, lending Commanding Officers and Career Managers a list of

²⁷ Department of National Defence, DRAFT *CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution* (Ottawa: Chief of the Defence Staff, n.d.), last modified 25 April 2022, 7.

²⁸ Department of National Defence, B-GL-005-100/FP-001, *CFJP 1.0 Military Personnel Management Doctrine* (Ottawa: DND, 2008), 2-3.

²⁹ Department of National Defence, B-GL-005-100/FP-001, *CFJP 1.0 Military Personnel Management Doctrine* (Ottawa: DND, 2008), 3-2.

items to consider prior to rendering a decision to support or deny a request. While these considerations highlight valid concerns around the appropriateness of remote work for a given individual or position, if the CAF truly wishes to enable uptake and reap the benefits offered through remote work, additional policies, procedures and technologies require updating. Otherwise, many of these considerations will serve as obstacles to achieving the CAF's greater aim of improved work-life balance among its personnel and ultimately improved retention.

Before a decision is rendered on a request to work remotely, a Commanding Officer is expected to assess whether an individual requires access to equipment or networks to effectively meet the demands of their position.³⁰ Understandably, some military positions necessitate regular access to secure networks, at times necessitating specialized equipment, which would impede the incumbent's ability to work remotely. Moreover, it is widely acknowledged that many DND business processes are outdated or on non-networked systems resulting in efforts to digitalize the force.³¹ Adopting a hybrid approach to remote work could mitigate complications stemming from specialized equipment or network access. However, it fails to address the core objective of CF Mil Pers Instr 01/22, which is to offer full-time remote work as means of limiting the demand for geographic relocations for its personnel. While information and data security are critical to defence business and operations, the CAF must evolve quickly in this policy

³⁰ Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Military Personnel Instruction (CF Mil Pers Instr) 01/22, *Changing a Place of Duty and the Use of Postings to Enable Remote Work Options*, (Ottawa: Chief of Military Personnel, 2022), 5.

³¹ Department of National Defence, *DRAFT CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution* (Ottawa: Chief of the Defence Staff, n.d.), last modified 25 April 2022, 7-8, 21.

and technology realm to capitalize fully on its remote work policy. Fortunately, digitalization is amongst the DND and CAF's top priorities.³²

Approval of a request to forgo physical relocation and adopt a remote working arrangement does not excuse supervisors, the Commanding Officer or the CAF from ensuring their people are well supported. The CAF offers a wide range of services to its members ranging from administrative to health and well-being. Canadian Forces Bases (CFB) are responsible for providing the bulk of those support services.³³ Services, such as medical, dental, mental health, physical fitness facilities, housing, pay and records support, training and family support.³⁴ The size of the community it serves determines a base's establishment, that is, the number of positions and personnel assigned to enable base operations, as well as its allocation of financial resources. Ad hoc changes to the working locations of CAF members have the potential to disrupt this arrangement. Consider the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), whose primary places of employment are Esquimalt, Halifax and the National Capital Region (NCR). The NCR, home to the CAF and RCN's headquarters and many of its corporate functions, primarily employs knowledge workers. Knowledge workers deal in information, developing and consuming knowledge products.³⁵ Consequently, should there be a surge in remote work approvals in the RCN, it is likely it would be in favour of remaining on one of the coasts, potentially increasing demand on support services from CFB Halifax and Esquimalt beyond what

³² Department of National Defence, DRAFT *CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution* (Ottawa: Chief of the Defence Staff, n.d.), last modified 25 April 2022, 7-8, 21.

³³ Department of National Defence, A-AE-219-001/AG-001, *Interim Organization and Establishment Policy (CFP 219)* (Ottawa: C Prog, n.d.), 56.

³⁴ Department of National Defence, A-AE-219-001/AG-001, *Interim Organization and Establishment Policy (CFP 219)* (Ottawa: C Prog, n.d.), 58.

³⁵ Yuri W. Ramírez and David A. Nembhard, "Measuring Knowledge Worker Productivity: A Taxonomy," *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 5, no. 4 (2004): 604.

their existing resource allocations permits. It is acknowledged that this scenario is hypothetical, albeit founded in reason. Its aim is to illustrate potential secondary effects of the CAF's remote work policy direction should it not consider the regulative pillar more fulsomely. As it stands, the CAF's remote work policy leaves this hefty consideration to Commanding Officers and Career Managers, risking lower approval rates of remote work requests.³⁶ Additionally, it could lead to strained CFB support services and inadequate support to personnel.

Breadth of experience has long been considered an essential aspect of a military career which, in part, drives the frequency of geographic relocation of personnel.³⁷ It constitutes a core principle of succession planning and a valuable asset when considering a candidate for promotion.³⁸ When competing for promotion, a candidate's file is assessed out of a hundred points. Breadth of experience accounts for roughly seven to 10% of that score.³⁹ Significant when comparing a candidate to equally competitive files. The CAF's remote work policy calls on Commanding Officers and Career Managers to assess the "impact on member's career development and breadth of experience" prior to rendering a decision on a request for remote work.⁴⁰ Potentially suggesting that remotely fulfilling the duties of a position may not grant the incumbent the full experiential

³⁶ Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Military Personnel Instruction (CF Mil Pers Instr) 01/22, *Changing a Place of Duty and the Use of Postings to Enable Remote Work Options*, (Ottawa: Chief of Military Personnel, 2022), 6.

³⁷ Government of Canada, "Moving and Relocation," last modified 13 November 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/caf-jobs/life/moving-relocation.html>.

³⁸ Department of National Defence, A-PD-229-001/AG-001, *Canadian Armed Forces Selection Board Guidance Manual* (Ottawa: CMP, 2021), 2-6.

³⁹ Department of National Defence, A-PD-229-001/AG-001, *Canadian Armed Forces Selection Board Guidance Manual* (Ottawa: CMP, 2021), F-3, G-2.

⁴⁰ Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Military Personnel Instruction (CF Mil Pers Instr) 01/22, *Changing a Place of Duty and the Use of Postings to Enable Remote Work Options*, (Ottawa: Chief of Military Personnel, 2022), 6.

development that typically accompanies that post. Thus limiting that individual's career progression or potentially generating future leadership unprepared for the next promotion or position. The challenge is that, to date, breadth of experience is measured by the different types and locations of positions held. There is no clarity on the specific experiences valued for the next rank or long-term succession planning. From the regulative perspective, the introduction of remote work would benefit from a holistic review of personnel management policies and directives on evaluation, promotion selection and succession planning. Ideally, the review would illuminate career impacts such that individuals, Career Managers and Commanding Officers can make educated decisions. Better yet, the review would break down some of these barriers to remote work.

NORMATIVE PILLAR

The normative pillar encompasses the values and norms that establish expected social behaviours, which facilitate cohesion and frame social obligation.⁴¹ Within the CAF, this pillar is primarily embodied through its ethos as described in *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms* in Canada. This document was first released in 2003 and updated in 2009 as part of CF Transformation.⁴² CAF ethos is receiving an overhaul, which will soon be published under the title *Trusted to Serve*.⁴³ A draft of this new ethos echoes Scott's assertion that an institution is reliant on not one but all three constitutive

⁴¹ W. Richard Scott, "Crafting an Analytic Framework I: Three Pillars of Institutions," in *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, 4th ed. (USA: Sage publications, 2013), 60, 64-66.

⁴² Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-01, *Duty with Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada*, (Ottawa: CDA, 2009), 1.

⁴³ Amanda Connolly, "Canadian Forces Publishing New Ethos in Wake of Sexual Misconduct Crisis: 'Trusted to Serve,'" *Global News*, 9 February 2022. <https://globalnews.ca/news/8607543/canadian-forces-sexual-misconduct-new-ethos/>.

elements. Stating, “The CAF does not rely solely on rules-based practices.”⁴⁴ It places significance on character and values through which sound judgements are made. First to shape the CAF’s normative pillar are its three ethical principles: respect the dignity of all persons, serve Canada before self, and obey and support lawful authority.⁴⁵ There are no obvious conflicts evolving from a shift to remote work and the CAF ethical principles and values. However, as will be discussed when assessing the cultural-cognitive pillar, there are longstanding assumptions and views stemming from the second principle of “serve Canada before self” that have shaped military culture in such a way that its espoused and enacted ethos do not always align.

Leadership is at the core of military identity, and it plays a supremely impactful role in institutional culture.⁴⁶ Despite the hierarchical nature of the CAF, every sailor, aviator and soldier, whether they be an officer or non-commissioned member, is expected to be a leader. Remote work challenges leadership norms within the CAF, both in terms of how military personnel lead and expect to be led. According to CAF leadership doctrine, “effective CF leaders get the job done, look after their people, think and act in terms of the larger team, anticipate and adapt to change, and exemplify the military ethos in all they do.”⁴⁷ While this characterization does not specify the need for face-to-face interaction to be an effective leader, it is certainly the norm. The norm resembles what Van Wart et al. call “traditional leadership,” characterized by “face-to-face

⁴⁴ Department of National Defence, DRAFT *The CAF Ethos - Trusted to Serve* (Ottawa: CDA, n.d.), 8.
⁴⁵ Department of National Defence, DRAFT *The CAF Ethos - Trusted to Serve* (Ottawa: CDA, n.d.), 13-15.

⁴⁶ Department of National Defence, DRAFT *The CAF Ethos - Trusted to Serve* (Ottawa: CDA, n.d.), 15.

⁴⁷ Department of National Defence, A-PA-005-000/AP-004, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations* (Ottawa: CDA, 2005), 30.

communication (speaking and listening) with its rich nonverbal communication and physical presence cues, as well as physical and “low-tech” dissemination of materials.”⁴⁸ Furthermore, long have military leaders relied on charisma and personal networks to influence outcomes and subordinates. Remote work can reduce the quality of communications and exchange of feedback and affect feelings of isolation.⁴⁹ Building the necessary social capital upon which military leaders depend may be difficult in this type of work environment. Gajendran and Harrison argue,

Changing one’s workplace from a conventional office to a home or an alternate location is likely to alter the frequency, the quality, and, by definition, the modality of interaction one has with other organization members. Telecommuting therefore has the potential to degrade the quality of the manager–subordinate relationship.⁵⁰

Research suggests that leaders who remained committed to high-quality exchanges with their subordinates overcame the challenges posed in virtual settings and that the leader–subordinate relationship remained steadfast.⁵¹ Achieving high-quality exchanges with subordinates who work remotely requires the development of skills specific to the virtual

⁴⁸ Montgomery Van Wart et al., “Operationalizing the Definition of E-Leadership: Identifying the Elements of e-Leadership,” *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 85, no. 1 (2019): 80–97, 82–83.

⁴⁹ Shruti R. Sardeshmukh, Dheeraj Sharma, and Timothy D. Golden, “Impact of Telework on Exhaustion and Job Engagement: A Job Demands and Job Resources Model,” *New Technology, Work, and Employment* 27, no. 3 (2012):197; Ravi S. Gajendran and David A. Harrison, “The Good, the Bad, and the Unknown About Telecommuting: Meta-Analysis of Psychological Mediators and Individual Consequences,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92, no. 6 (2007): 1538.

⁵⁰ Ravi S. Gajendran and David A. Harrison, “The Good, the Bad, and the Unknown About Telecommuting: Meta-Analysis of Psychological Mediators and Individual Consequences,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92, no. 6 (2007): 1527.

⁵¹ Timothy D. Golden and John F. Veiga, “The Impact of Superior–Subordinate Relationships on the Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Performance of Virtual Workers,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (2008): 85.

work environment that may not be intuitive to existing CAF leadership. The foundation is familiar, including communication, social, team building and change management skills. Their application within a virtual environment is what makes them “new” to the average military leader. While such a challenge is not likely to dissuade applications for remote work arrangements, failure to consider such a disruption to the normative elements of the CAF will threaten approval rates, successful implementation of remote work policies and curb the benefits of such an arrangement.

Along the same vein as leadership is mentorship. Mentorship, along with the previously mentioned breadth of experience, plays a key role in how the CAF develops its people.⁵² Such methods of personnel development are rooted in social learning theory, which involves learning through observation and imitation.⁵³ Again, the tried approach to mentorship and on-the-job training calls for in-person interaction with supervisors and higher-level leaders. According to Yarberry and Sims, while a shift to remote work adds a level of complexity to this type of activity, it is surmountable.⁵⁴ It does, however, require dedicated effort and programs to enable the same, if not improved, level of employee engagement, recognition and personal support offered through traditional mentorship and personnel development programs. Again, highlighting the requirement for an institutional analysis of change initiatives.

⁵² Department of National Defence, *The CAF Ethos - Trusted to Serve* (Ottawa: CDA, n.d.), 33.

⁵³ Shana Yarberry and Cynthia Sims, “The Impact of COVID-19-Prompted Virtual/Remote Work Environments on Employees’ Career Development: Social Learning Theory, Belongingness, and Self-Empowerment,” *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 23, no. 3 (2021): 240.

⁵⁴ Shana Yarberry and Cynthia Sims, “The Impact of COVID-19-Prompted Virtual/Remote Work Environments on Employees’ Career Development: Social Learning Theory, Belongingness, and Self-Empowerment,” *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 23, no. 3 (2021): 237–52.

The CAF is currently concerned with its culture. It recently stood up a Chief of Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC), whose mission is to develop a roadmap and lead necessary action to elevate institutional culture to its espoused values.⁵⁵

Unsurprisingly, tackling barriers to achieving a truly equitable, diverse and inclusive workforce and workplace makes up an important part of the CPCC mandate.⁵⁶ Inclusion, while a work in progress for the CAF, can be considered the norm. In fact, it is included in the upcoming release of *Trusted Serve* as one of eight professional expectations of military members (which also includes leadership). Although offering remote work to CAF members appears to be a welcomed option, remote work can pose a significant challenge to progressing institutional diversity, equity, and inclusivity objectives.

Associate Professor of Human Relations Marilyn Y. Byrd identifies how remote work can negatively influence inclusion and belonging and, consequently, the assumption of meaningful work.⁵⁷ The 2022 Angus Reid Poll substantiates this claim, reporting that only half of Canadians working from home feel a sense of connectedness, belonging and engagement.⁵⁸ Specifically affecting inclusion, a remote work environment can make it even more challenging for leaders to confront biases that can promote exclusion within the workplace.⁵⁹ Remote work can strain communication, increase feelings of social

⁵⁵ Government of Canada, “CDS/DM Initiating Directive for Professional Conduct and Culture,” last modified 30 April 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/dm-cds-directives/cds-dm-initiating-directive-professional-conduct-culture.html#toc5>.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Marilyn Y. Byrd, “Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Belongingness in Remote Work Environments That Sustains Meaningful Work,” *Human Resource Development International* 25, no. 2 (2022): 157.

⁵⁸ Angus Reid Institute. “Back to Work(place): As Employers Beckon, Telecommuters Grow More Entrenched at Home.” Last accessed 30 April 2022. <https://angusreid.org/covid-19-pandemic-work-from-home-return-to-work/>.

⁵⁹ Marilyn Y. Byrd, “Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Belongingness in Remote Work Environments That Sustains Meaningful Work,” *Human Resource Development International* 25, no. 2 (2022): 148.

isolation and negatively affect working relationships and work/life balance.⁶⁰ These are all contributors to a decreased sense of belonging amongst workers. CAF members are not immune. Feelings of belonging are bolstered when people feel respected and their contributions facilitated and recognized. Further contributing to a strong sense of belonging is the bond formed through shared experiences. This last point is a concept well understood and employed by militaries as part of their socialization processes and team-building efforts, basic training being the prime example. Byrd suggests inclusive leadership and the dismantling of hierarchies as a means of countering these challenges.⁶¹ Hierarchy undoubtedly reflects another norm within the normative pillar that, if challenged, could result in opposition to change initiatives.

CULTURAL-COGNITIVE PILLAR

The cultural-cognitive pillar, not to be confused with the normative pillar, refers to how people within an institution frame and give meaning to their actions and surroundings. Within this pillar lies the assumptions and beliefs through which shared understanding and social cohesion are achieved.⁶² A 2016 survey of the public service concluded that the greatest obstacle to pursuing flexible work arrangements, of which remote work was one, is organizational culture. Respondents revealed that stigma

⁶⁰ Marilyn Y. Byrd, "Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Belongingness in Remote Work Environments That Sustains Meaningful Work," *Human Resource Development International* 25, no. 2 (2022): 145–62.; Ravi S. Gajendran and David A. Harrison, "The Good, the Bad, and the Unknown About Telecommuting: Meta-Analysis of Psychological Mediators and Individual Consequences," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92, no. 6 (2007): 1525.

⁶¹ Marilyn Y. Byrd, "Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Belongingness in Remote Work Environments That Sustains Meaningful Work," *Human Resource Development International* 25, no. 2 (2022): 153.

⁶² W. Richard Scott, "Crafting an Analytic Framework I: Three Pillars of Institutions," in *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, 4th ed. (USA: Sage publications, 2013), 60, 66-70.

accompanies employees who pursue flexible work arrangements.⁶³ Stigma is rooted in misunderstanding and bias. The following paragraphs will explore some of those beliefs and biases that may cause opposition to the CAF's remote work policy.

Remote work can challenge the boundary between work and home life, in some instances for the better and at times for the worse. Some researchers suggest that remote work renders it difficult to disengage from the workday and maintain clear boundaries between their work and personal lives.⁶⁴ This may be attributed to the worker who, due to the physical melding of workplace and home, has difficulty distinguishing the two or due to their physical absence from the office, feels the need to prove their worth; alternatively, to the manager who, due to the worker's connectedness pushes the boundaries of work hours. Ultimately, both instances speak to cultural-cognitive beliefs prevalent within the CAF and many other workplaces. Conversely, an argument has been made for the flexibility that comes with remote work in that it enables workers to better manage personal and work commitments. Reduced commutes serve as one example, where this time could facilitate children's school drop-off and pick-up, physical fitness activities or other errands and appointments. If not considered and addressed in conjunction with the increased prevalence of remote work, the following beliefs risk limited remote work request approval rates and diminishing returns on the desired benefits of improved work-life balance:

⁶³ Employment and Social Development Canada, *Flexible Work Arrangements: What Was Heard*, (Ottawa: ESDC, 2016), 8, 17-18.

⁶⁴ Ravi S. Gajendran and David A. Harrison, "The Good, the Bad, and the Unknown About Telecommuting: Meta-Analysis of Psychological Mediators and Individual Consequences," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92, no. 6 (2007): 1527.

- The belief that working extended hours equates to a more committed and productive employee. The productivity of knowledge workers is extremely difficult to measure. Typically the work is complex with ambiguous standards and timelines.⁶⁵ As a consequence, supervisors can default to time spent at a desk to assess performance;
- The belief that a committed employee is always available. As yearly salary earners with no union and no entitlement to paid overtime, CAF members are believed to have no set work hours. Combined with unlimited liability, there is an expectation that they are ready to respond to any demand at any time. While this is true for truly urgent matters and responses to domestic and international operations, it should not be the case for regular activities; and
- The belief that an employee out-of-sight is not working. Both supervisors and subordinates suppose that in-person interaction, or being seen to do work, is related to favourable performance outcomes and performance evaluations.⁶⁶

Within the CAF, these beliefs stem from a perversion of CAF ethos, specifically concepts of sacrifice, service before self and loyalty and abuse of a military member's agreement to unlimited liability. Extreme interpretations of CAF ethos can result in leaders in peers questioning a person's loyalty and commitment should they prioritize family or personal pursuits above their work. Leadership that perpetuates these negative beliefs drive unproductive subordinate behaviours such as replying to email correspondence outside of

⁶⁵ Yuri W. Ramírez and David A. Nembhard, "Measuring Knowledge Worker Productivity: A Taxonomy," *Journal of Intellectual Capital* 5, no. 4 (2004): 603.

⁶⁶ Ravi S. Gajendran and David A. Harrison, "The Good, the Bad, and the Unknown About Telecommuting: Meta-Analysis of Psychological Mediators and Individual Consequences," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 92, no. 6 (2007): 1528.

normal working hours or on weekends as a show of hard work and commitment. While unsatisfactory in a traditional workplace, the negative effects of this type of leadership and subordinate behaviour could be exacerbated in a remote work setting where the line between home and work is blurred.

The previously listed beliefs will also influence the pursuit of inclusion and potentially thwart institutional goals such as increasing female representation in the CAF and amongst senior officers.⁶⁷ As an example, women are more likely to favour remote working arrangements.⁶⁸ Although this statement is based on the preferences of the average Canadian, should this sentiment be reflected in the CAF, it could present a challenge for the institution. If strong views regarding what it means to be loyal and sacrifice for one's country cement adverse bias towards remote workers, this could translate into inequitable employment practices. The CAF has acknowledged the existence of deep-rooted biases that serve to erect barriers to inclusion, diversity and equity efforts.⁶⁹ Leaders have a tendency to favour subordinates who most resemble themselves, demographically, personality-wise and attitude-wise.⁷⁰ There is a risk this be exacerbated through the generation of in-groups and proliferation of in-group bias –

⁶⁷ Government of Canada, "2019-2020 Department of National Defence Departmental Progress Report for Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security," last modified 10 June 2021, <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/canada-national-action-plan/2019-2020-progress-reports-rapports-etapes-dnd.aspx?lang=eng>.

⁶⁸ Angus Reid Institute. "Back to Work(place): As Employers Beckon, Telecommuters Grow More Entrenched at Home." Last accessed 30 April 2022. <https://angusreid.org/covid-19-pandemic-work-from-home-return-to-work/>; Benefits Canada, "Women Embracing Remote Working During the Pandemic More than Men: Survey," last accessed 2 May 2022, <https://www.benefitscanada.com/news/bencan/women-embracing-remote-working-during-the-pandemic-more-than-men-survey/>.

⁶⁹ Government of Canada, "CDS/DM Initiating Directive for Professional Conduct and Culture," last modified 30 April 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/dm-cds-directives/cds-dm-initiating-directive-professional-conduct-culture.html#toc5>.

⁷⁰ Ardashir Zahed and Farzad Sattari Ardabili, "Effect of Similar-to-Me Effect on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Trust," *Problems and Perspectives in Management* 15, no. 4 (2017): 255.

onsite workers versus remote workers.⁷¹ Similarly, proximity bias can be at play. This affects not only varying attitudes between onsite and remote workers but can result in onsite personnel being selected ahead of their remotely working peers for participation in key meetings, mentorship opportunities and high-profile projects. Consequently, proximity bias increasingly challenges institutional inclusion efforts and perpetuates inequities related to career advancement and feelings of belonging.

CF Mil Pers Intr 01/22 calls on Commanding Officers to assess the impact of approving a remote work request by using the analytical tool Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+).⁷² This noble pursuit will force introspection and potentially facilitate structural and procedural improvements. However, addressing the aforementioned biases will take an institutional-level intervention. Fortunately, initial efforts to combat bias are underway through online unconscious bias training and the intent to pursue expanded training and educational opportunities.⁷³ Additional efforts could focus on educating CAF leaders, supervisors and personnel on the misconceptions and benefits of remote work as they relate to both work-life balance and operational effectiveness. Much like the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, which released a guide to flexible work arrangements with much of the content dedicated to just that.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Rosalie J. Ocker et al., “Leadership Dynamics in Partially Distributed Teams: An Exploratory Study of the Effects of Configuration and Distance,” *Group Decision and Negotiation* 20, no. 3 (2011): 275, 278.

⁷² Department of National Defence, Canadian Forces Military Personnel Instruction (CF Mil Pers Instr) 01/22, *Changing a Place of Duty and the Use of Postings to Enable Remote Work Options*, (Ottawa: Chief of Military Personnel, 2022), 6.

⁷³ Government of Canada, “CDS/DM Initiating Directive for Professional Conduct and Culture,” last modified 30 April 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/dm-cds-directives/cds-dm-initiating-directive-professional-conduct-culture.html#toc5>.

⁷⁴ United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, *Flexible Working and You: A Guide for Service Personnel* (UK: UK MOD, 2019).

CONCLUSION

As is, the existing Canadian Armed Forces remote work policy, in the form of a Canadian Forces Military Personnel Instruction, merely describes the process for submitting and approving requests to work remotely. Said policy aims to reduce the need for frequent relocations and improve sailor, aviator and soldier quality of life. Underpinning this goal is the desire to improve CAF recruitment and retention. Regardless of the recently tested work-from-home posture adopted by DND over the course of the pandemic, the CAF's remote work policy is in fact, a significant institutional change. Shepherding change of this magnitude requires a more holistic approach and much more than words on paper. Scott's institutional analytic framework enables such an approach by forcing the breakdown of an institution into its constitutive parts, which he refers to as institutional pillars: regulative, normative, and cultural cognitive. Failure to evaluate institutional change efforts against all three pillars can result in resistance and ill-application of new policies, hindering well-meaning intentions. Specific to the CAF's introduction of remoting working arrangements, it can curb uptake rates and stifle greater institutional goals. Specifically those of increased retention and inclusion. While considering the regulative pillar, a number of auxiliary policies and technological updates are necessary to facilitate remote working arrangements and encourage approval and uptake rates, specifically in areas, such as enabling the virtual environment through the digitalization of CAF business processes and improved network access; reevaluating support services offered through Canadian Forces Bases; and reevaluating current career management, promotion and succession planning policies. Under the normative pillar, it became evident that a shift to remote work challenged

institutional norms around leadership, personnel development and inclusion. Finally, while looking at remote work through a cultural-cognitive lens, it is evident that the cultural-cognitive pillar cannot be ignored. The existence of longstanding unconstructive beliefs around work and service before self as well as biases such as the similar-to-me effect and proximity and in-group biases, will undoubtedly serve as barriers to reaping the full benefit of remote work. Failure to tackle these cultural-cognitive beliefs as part of implementing remote working arrangements has the potential to prevent both subordinate requests and Commanding Officer support and will thwart the greater institutional-level goals of improved retention and inclusion. With the guidance of Scott's three institutional pillars, this analysis offers a preliminary look at potential challenges to the CAF's recently promulgated policy on remote work. The challenges highlighted by this analysis are not in support of the elimination of remote working arrangements in the CAF. For the sake of improved retention and inclusion, it behooves institutional leadership to reflect on other ways regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that support CAF can influence the success of remote working arrangements.

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