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MISSING THE TARGET: RECRUITMENT OF WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Major Carrie McQuiggan

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Service Paper

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Major Carrie McQuiggan

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MISSING THE TARGET: RECRUITMENT OF WOMEN IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

AIM

1. The purpose of this service paper is to present recommendations to the Chief of Military Personnel (CMP) in order achieve the target number of women in non-traditional roles within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). There are many intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence career choice and the decision to pursue a trade within the CAF. This paper will discuss key factors that impact women in choosing a career and will provide recommendations on actions the CAF could take toward meeting their target of 25% of the force being female by 2026, along with increasing the representation of women in under-represented occupations.¹

INTRODUCTION

2. Non-traditional careers are those in which 75% or more of those employed are of one gender.² For example, nursing is an occupation that is non-traditional for men as more than 75% of those employed within this field are women. However, a larger number of occupations have greater than 75% men in their positions and the military has approximately “2,000 regular-force and 5,000 reserve positions” that are vacant.³ Women currently represent 47% of the Canadian work force and 16% of the CAF.⁴ This statistic represents an “increase of less than 1% in the last three years” to the number of women employed within the CAF and demonstrates that current measures have not achieved the desired results.⁵ A reduced capacity to enroll and train recruits, increased familial responsibilities (school and daycare closures), and other issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic are responsible for some of this shortfall.

3 This paper will discuss the term non-traditional roles and propose adoption of alternate terminology as well as review current statistics and their data limitations in

¹ Canada. *Women in the Canadian Armed Forces*. 26 February, 2021. Ottawa: Accessed 10 January, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces.html>

² Karen, D. Hughes. “Women in non-traditional occupations”. Statistics Canada: Catalogue 75-001E, Perspectives, Autumn 1995.

³ Lee Berthiaume. “Canadian military short thousands of troops as COVID-19 impedes recruitment, training.” *The Canadian Press*. 14 February, 2021. Accessed 20 January, 2022. <https://www.cp24.com/news/canadian-military-short-thousands-of-troops-as-covid-19-impedes-recruitment-training-1.5308846>

⁴ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Statistics of women in the Canadian Armed Forces*. 23 September, 2020. Ottawa: Accessed 10 January, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces/statistics.html>

⁵ Ibid.

comparing military and civilian occupations. However, the focus of this paper is to examine barriers related to the recruitment and retention of women in the CAF and to propose recommendations to enable the CAF to achieve its employment equity target, although it is unlikely to do so by 2026.^{6,7}

CONTEXT

4. *Historical.* In Canada, women have served within the military since the North-West Rebellion in 1885 where they provided support as nurses.⁸ During the First World War, more than 30,000 women entered the workforce in a variety of non-traditional roles within factories, farms, and offices.⁹ During the Second World War, 50,000 Canadian Women served in military roles ranging from packing parachutes to driving and maintaining vehicles and aircraft.¹⁰ They were also employed in the civilian workforce in shipbuilding, logging, munition factories, and scientific research.¹¹ Thus, women have been employed in non-traditional roles for approximately 80-100 years in Canada and there is a significant record of their meritorious achievements. The term “non-traditional” is a deterrent to increasing diversity within an occupation as it inadvertently implies that one gender has more success than another within that field. It also fails to highlight that a diverse group would be a benefit within the occupation and misses the opportunity to highlight the successes of past or existing “non-traditional” members of the target occupation.¹²

5. *Statistical Limitations.* CAF 2020 statistics indicate that women represent 15.8% of Regular Force members “(19.8% officers/14.3% non-commissioned members (NCMs))” and 16.6% of Primary Reserve members “(16.9% officers/ 16.6% NCMs)”.¹³ From an environmental perspective, women represented “20.6% of the Navy, 13.5% of the Army, and 19.8% of the Air Force.”¹⁴ These statistics represent the personnel wearing

⁶ Alan Morantz. Can the Canadian Armed Forces Recruit More Women? Queens University, Smith School of Business. 2 March, 2021. Accessed 16 January, 2022. <https://smith.queensu.ca/insight/content/how-can-the-canadian-armed-forces-recruit-more-women.php>

⁷ Emma Moore and Mike Martinez. “It’s Only Going to Get Harder to Recruit and Retain Troops in a Post-Pandemic World.” *Defense One*. 21 May 2020. Accessed 16 January, 2022. <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/05/its-only-going-get-harder-recruit-and-retain-troops-post-pandemic-world/165555/>

⁸ Canada. Women Veterans: Timeline. 29 March, 2017. Accessed 10 January, 2022. <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/women-veterans/timeline>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Canada. Statistics of women in the Canadian Armed Forces. 23 September, 2020. Ottawa: Accessed 10 January, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces/statistics.html>

¹⁴ Ibid.

a specific uniform and not the number of personnel employed within a specific environment. For example, a naval medical officer may be a specialist in aviation medicine and work primarily with the air force for the duration of their career. The uniform itself, and thus the above statistics, do not accurately reflect the primary environment where many members of support occupations are employed.

6. Statistics Canada tracks Canadian employment data by gender utilizing a “national occupation classification”.¹⁵ This code is comprised of several occupations grouped together into categories.¹⁶ The military compiles occupational data within the “Annual Military Occupation Review” by specific trade which does not align to the national occupation codes, this limits the utility of comparing these two data sets. For example, Statistics Canada reports that “35.6% of management positions” are held by women, whereas the CAF is significantly lower if the comparison is made with the percentage of women in the CAF who are officers.¹⁷ Chief Warrant Officers could also be included as a management occupation and several officer trades such as nurses are captured in a different category in the civilian data.¹⁸ Although these differences create significant challenges when comparing data sets, the Statistics Canada data does demonstrate similarities in regards to the occupation categories where women are under-represented.¹⁹ For example, within Canada in “industrial, electrical and construction trades, 2.6% are women; in the transport and equipment operator field, 4.4% are women; and in occupations geared towards front-line public protection services, 6.5% are women.”²⁰ Based on these statistics, it suggests that the CAF has been moderately successful in increasing the percentage of women in similar occupations where they are under-represented within Canada’s workforce. Especially considering that every occupation within the CAF requires basic soldier skills in addition to the specialized occupational skills and knowledge specific to their role. The CAF has several initiatives in place to enhance recruitment, but misses the mark or needs to increase investment in recruitment, hybrid learning, cooperative programs, and mentorship.

¹⁵ Canada. *National Occupational Classification*. 20 October, 2021. Accessed 12 January, 2022. <https://noc.esdc.gc.ca/Home/Welcome/4d655901c5a8499d8af705bb2a3aee03?GoCTemplateCulture=en-CA>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Canada. Statistics Canada. Proportion of women and men employed in management positions, annual. 7 January, 2022. Accessed 20 January, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410033503>

¹⁸ Canada. *National Occupational Classification*...

¹⁹ Canada. House of Commons. “Report 5 – Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention – National Defence.” Fall 2016. Reports of the Auditor General of Canada. Accessed 20 January, 2022.

²⁰ Canada. Statistics Canada. *Proportion of women and men employed in occupations, annual*. 7 January, 2022. Accessed 16 January, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410033502>

DISCUSSION

7. *E-Recruitment.* Comprehensive recruitment websites enable members to research career options, pay, benefits, and submit an application with ease.²¹ Engaging videos and photos which include women working within the trade are helpful in explaining to prospective candidates what they can expect.²² The videos are very gender inclusive and inspirational although they lack any footage regarding basic training. As this portion of recruitment is the most intimidating, online resources should endeavor to demystify this part of the experience. In addition, each occupation's recruiting page is linked to the same basic training information despite there being differences for certain groups.²³ In the absence of footage, a candidate conducting a google search would find a basic training video from 2014.²⁴ It highlights a diverse range of candidates and is very gender inclusive but no longer reflects the current experience for those in basic training. The next website hit connects to episodes of "Truth Duty Valour" which highlights the high attrition rates and personal challenges that basic training poses.²⁵ These videos are not the best ambassadors for attracting specific professions into the forces nor for increasing the number of women.²⁶ It is essential to have the most complete and accurate information available on the recruiting websites, but this does not replace the human connection that is needed in order to attract a diverse range of recruits. Women in recruitment roles and a network to connect prospective recruits with role models in their chosen field are valuable tools.²⁷ A similar network exists within the RCAF to connect new families with supportive families at their new posting location.²⁸ The CAF could consider expanding upon that idea to connect new or prospective recruits to a peer support within their target occupation.²⁹

²¹ Rasa Smaliukiene and Sergejus Trifonovas. "E-Recruitment In The Military: Challenges and Opportunities For Development." *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*. 2012, 1(4): 299-307. Accessed 16 January, 2022. <https://etalpykla.lituanistikadb.lt/object/LT-LDB-0001:J.04~2012~1367190278202/J.04~2012~1367190278202.pdf>

²² Canada. Department of National Defence. *Joining The Canadian Armed Forces*. n.d. Accessed 18 January, 2022 from: <https://forces.ca/en/how-to-join/#bt>

²³ Canada. Department of National Defence. The Canadian Armed Forces: Careers: Chaplain. Accessed 20 January, 2022. <https://forces.ca/en/career/chaplain/>

²⁴ "Basic Military Qualification Course." YouTube Video, 7:30. Posted by "Canadian Armed Forces". 13 June, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MatKOpUbUEA>

²⁵ "Truth Duty Valour Episode 404- Boot Camp – No Guts, No Glory." YouTube Video, 46:06. Posted by "JenCor Entertainment,." 2 February, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq6tl9r8Sl8V4CflmcqELSQ/about>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Douglas Yeung, Christina E. Stiener, Chaitra M. Hardison, Lawrence M. Hanser, Kristy N. Kamarck. Recruiting Policies and Practices for Women in the Military: Views from the Field. RAND Corporation. 2017. Accessed 20 January, 2022. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1500/RR1538/RAND_RR1538.pdf

²⁸ Military Family Services. RCAF Family Connection Program. 17 June, 2021. Accessed 16 January, 2022. <https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/Pages/RCAF-.aspx>

²⁹ Douglas Yeung, Christina E. Stiener, Chaitra M. Hardison, Lawrence M. Hanser, Kristy N. Kamarck. Recruiting Policies and Practices for Women in the Military: Views from the Field...

8. *Co-op Programs.* Early exposure to career opportunities within the CAF through cooperation with high school education programs offers access to a broad range of potential candidates. Many high schools are partnered with industry and community colleges to offer advanced training and apprenticeship programs. The CAF has partnered in cooperative education in a few high schools as well as offering specialized summer training programs for indigenous students.^{30,31} Localized training enables easy access to family and a familiar peer group in order to provide support during the program. The programs are generally geared to recruitment within a particular reserve unit, but could be expanded upon as a recruitment effort for the Regular Force if policies were altered to enable a transfer upon completion of the program in grade 12 vice the lengthy process and extreme limitations currently in place for component transfers. Perhaps additional funding could be provided to reserve units to compensate for each person they successfully train who is accepted for a Regular Force position, thus encouraging further investment in their program. Local programs have the potential to reduce the number of personnel awaiting basic training programs and decrease recruitment processing delays. The program could alternatively be open to adults to participate in on a part-time basis with the intent of filling either a Regular or Reserve Force position upon completion. The key to success for this type of program would be a standards cell that oversees the delivery of training through approval of training schedules and ongoing professional development training and mentorship for local instructors, which could be provided virtually. Co-operative programs could also be offered as a full-time program in the summer, providing summer jobs and extra credit for students as well as increasing the potential pool of applicants and instructors.³² It would also reduce costs associated with rations and quarters and address issues related to Covid-19 precautions by remaining localized.

9. *Virtual/Hybrid learning.* The current pandemic has required rapid innovations and policy changes regarding training and recruitment.³³ Technological investments are enabling courses or portions of training to be delivered virtually to reduce the potential for transmission of the virus. These technologies also have the ability to greatly reduce wait times for basic and occupational training by accommodating larger numbers of students per serial due to the reduced need for classrooms, rations and quarters (R&Q), and instructional staff. In Health Services, courses have been adapted to provide

³⁰ CBC News. *Students get Armed Forces experience with Thunder Bay's Army Co-Op program.* 15 February, 2020. Accessed 12 January, 2022. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/thunder-bay-army-co-op-1.5465574>

³¹ Steven Fouchard. *Learning about the Army through an innovative high school program.* 11 June, 2019. Project Number: 19-0152.

³² Ibid.

³³ Emma Moore and Mike Martinez. "It's Only Going to Get Harder to Recruit and Retain Troops in a Post-Pandemic World." ...

instruction virtually and enable the student to practice and be tested in their skills at CAF medical facilities across the country. In the past there were concerns about de-centralizing instruction as it is more difficult to maintain a standard. However, staff from the Canadian Health Services Training Centre (CFHSTC) can still provide briefings to local instructors and attend testing sessions virtually when warranted. Although additional coordination is required, hybrid delivery (combination of virtual and in-person de-centralized training) reduces the amount of time that students and augmentative staff are away from their families, reduces risk of virus transmission, and increases trainee throughput that would otherwise not be possible. It requires some imagination, financial investment, and a redesign of training delivery in order to fully leverage the potential that virtual and/or hybrid training offers. It could also be leveraged to augment reserve force training programs as the vast majority of students across the country have access to a computer and internet connection either at school or at home. Many remote communities also have access to internet and robust Ranger programs, which could potentially be leveraged to enable remote learners to train within their own communities and qualify for Regular Force or additional Reserve Force positions.³⁴

10. *Allied forces.* NATO statistics in 2019 indicate that 12% of its combined member forces are comprised of women.³⁵ Canada was tied in 4th place with Bulgaria, France, and Latvia at 16%, and the United States was in 3rd place with 17% of their respective full-time military forces being comprised of women.³⁶ Belgium had the highest representation of women at 20%.³⁷ In the United States (US), 60% of women in the army are recruited from military families, demonstrating that early exposure and pro-military parents do have a positive effect on attracting women to military occupations.³⁸ Positive role models within the occupations help to alter the perception that certain occupations are non-traditional for women or other under-represented members. They also help promote the message that National Defence is an organization that values diversity and is eager to recruit new members into a workforce that is reflective of the Canadian population. In the US, women have expressed concerns regarding work schedules, organizational culture, family planning, dependent care, deployments, and sexual assault.³⁹ The CAF has robust

³⁴ Brittany Collier. *Broadband Internet in Indigenous Communities*. Library of Parliament: Hill Notes. 8 December, 2021 Accessed 16 January, 2022. <https://hillnotes.ca/2021/12/08/broadband-internet-in-indigenous-communities/>

³⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. *2019 NATO Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives*. 2019. Accessed 18 January, 2022. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/9/pdf/NCGP_Full_Report_2019.pdf

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Patricia Kime. "The US military isn't doing nearly enough to attract and retain women, report finds". *Task & Purpose*. 20 May 2020. Accessed 18 January, 2022. <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/women-in-the-military-2020-report/>

³⁹ Douglas Yeung, Christina E. Stiener, Chaitra M. Hardison, Lawrence M. Hanser, Kristy N. Kamarck. *Recruiting Policies and Practices for Women in the Military: Vies from the Field...*

policies for many of these issues, and has strived to improve in these areas. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, employment restrictions which have led to increased working from home and dependent care support challenges are concerns that have yet to be addressed.

11. *Dependent Care.* The CAF does not have sufficient capacity or flexible childcare hours to aid members in meeting their work and family commitments. Childcare shortages and waitlists have been a source of stress every year when families with young children are posted. This has been reduced somewhat by new policies that enable parents to remain at home for 18 months to care for their infant(s).⁴⁰ However, there are still childcare shortages and very few programs to care for children during night shifts, taskings, illness, and school holidays. The Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) does provide assistance with access to daycare.⁴¹ However, they have a waitlist in many locations and limited positions for summer and holiday care programs depending upon location. Military families re-located to bases far from familial support face significant challenges in balancing work and parental care obligations.

12. *Covid-19 Pandemic.* Recent changes to policies, technology, and support have digitalized many workplaces enabling members in certain occupations/positions to work from home. As many schools have been closed during Covid-19, jobs with flexible work hours and work from home arrangements are increasingly more appealing to parents, thus making it even more difficult to recruit women into the infantry or other jobs that require significant time away from home.

CONCLUSION

13. Women represent 47% of the Canadian work force and 16% of the CAF, although the numbers are almost equal if the civilian employees of the National Defence team are included in that number.⁴² Canadian unemployment rates are low at 5.9%, which heighten the competition to attract new members at a time when the forces need to increase recruitment to fill numerous vacant positions.⁴³ Prolonged wait-times for recruitment processes and training courses in addition to a lack of exposure to opportunities and expectations regarding employment within the CAF are key factors

⁴⁰ Canada. Employment and Social Development. *More choice for parents*. Accessed 18 January, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/campaigns/ei-improvements/parental-choice.html>

⁴¹ Military Family Services – NCR. *Choosing Childcare: Ottawa and Area*. Accessed 16 January, 2021. https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/3c5341b4-25e8-4716-ac90-2fd5c7ddb550/Choosing-Childcare-in-Ottawa-Area_2.pdf.aspx

⁴² Canada. Department of National Defence. *Statistics of women in the Canadian Armed Forces...*

⁴³ Canada. Statistics Canada. “Labour Force Survey”. *The Daily*. November, 2021. Released 3 December, 2021.

limiting people from applying and completing training. A lack of parental supports further reduces the number of people able to commit to working outside of the home or during the frequent absences required for training, exercises, and deployments in some occupations.⁴⁴

RECOMMENDATION

14. There are several initiatives that should be investigated to improve recruitment of women into the CAF in occupations where they are currently under-represented:

- a. Update recruitment pages to accurately reflect basic training requirements and provide video footage welcoming recruits to the various training centres involved in basic and occupational training.^{45,46} Pair recruits with an advisor (virtually or by phone) from within their planned occupation to provide a personal connection to answer questions and provide support during the training and posting period;⁴⁷
- b. Utilize the total force concept to enable reserve force units to provide basic training for reserve and regular force members residing in their regions;
- c. Provide early exposure to career opportunities within the military through co-op and summer programs provided by local reserve units with standards oversight and instructor professional development provided virtually by the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit Training Centre (CFLRTC).^{48, 49} Mandate that all course staff complete the Basic Instructional Techniques course prior to providing instruction to students;
- d. Maximize virtual technologies for instruction to reduce time spent away from family.⁵⁰ Eliminate pools of Personnel Awaiting Training by embedding students in an occupationally relevant work environment or provide on-line training opportunities where students can remain co-located with family;

⁴⁴ Douwere Grekou and Yuqian Lu. "Gender differences in employment one year into the COVID-19 pandemic: An analysis by industrial sector and firm size". 26 May, 2021. *Statistics Canada*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/36280001202100500005-eng>

⁴⁵ Canada. Department of National Defence. The Canadian Armed Forces: Careers: Chaplain...

⁴⁶ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Joining The Canadian Armed Forces...*

⁴⁷ Douglas Yeung, Christina E. Stienner, Chaitra M. Hardison, Lawrence M. Hanser, Kristy N. Kamarek. "Recruiting Policies and Practices for Women in the Military: Views from the Field"...

⁴⁸ CBC News. *Students get Armed Forces experience with Thunder Bay's Army Co-Op program...*

⁴⁹ Steven Fouchard. *Learning about the Army through an innovative high school program...*

⁵⁰ Alan Morantz. "Can the Canadian Armed Forces Recruit More Women?" Queens University: Smith School of Business. 2 March, 2021. Accessed 16 January, 2022. <https://smith.queensu.ca/insigh/content/how-can-the-canadian-armed-forces-recruit-more-women.php>.

- e. Advocate for MFRC to increase childcare capacity through support to families interested in offering daycare and other childcare support to military families (education regarding how to plan and run a daycare program, toy lending library, first-aid courses, professional development opportunities, etc.); ^{51,52}
- f. Advocate for the development of childcare centres to provide care for mildly ill children;⁵³
- g. Cease using the term non-traditional occupation and consider using the term “under-represented” where applicable; and
- h. Provide career open house opportunities with simulated shooting (portable reusable equipment is \$200, if legally permissible for the venue), virtual engine building, force test set-up, and other virtual reality training or training aids to simulate under-represented occupations.^{54,55,56}

⁵¹ Military Family Services – NCR. *Choosing Childcare: Ottawa and Area*. Accessed 16 January, 2021. https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/3c5341b4-25e8-4716-ac90-2fd5c7ddb550/Choosing-Childcare-in-Ottawa-Area_2.pdf.aspx

⁵² Douwere Grekou and Yuqian Lu. “Gender differences in employment one year into the COVID-19 pandemic: An analysis by industrial sector and firm size”...

⁵³ ABC Child Care. *Chicken Soup Program*. Accessed 16 January, 2021. <https://www.abccares.com/programs/chicken-soup-room/>

⁵⁴ Laserhit. LaserHIT- Dry Fire Training Kit. Accessed 20 January, 2022. <https://www.laserhit.com/>

⁵⁵ Mike Markowitz. Women With Guns: The Red Army Female Snipers of World War II. Defense Media Network. Accessed 21 January, 2022. <https://www.defensemmedianetwork.com/stories/women-guns-red-army-female-snipers-world-war-ii/>

⁵⁶ Paula Duhatschek. “Why this female firearm instructor says she wants more women to learn the sport.” *CBC News*. 27 March, 2018.

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