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CAREER MANAGEMENT: MODERNIZATION IS A MUST

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CAREER MANAGEMENT: MODERNIZATION IS A MUST

AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to inform leadership of the antiquated and inadequate approaches to career management within Director General Military Careers (DGMC), and how the modernization of practices and systems can help improve personnel management. In addition to highlighting the areas that require modernization, this service paper will provide recommendations to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) leadership on how best to address these problems with renewed initiatives within DGMC.

INTRODUCTION

2. Since the 2000's the CAF has been in a perpetual state of modernization, be it the modernization of organizational structures that were ushered in by General Hillier or the modernization of equipment and capabilities as outlined in Strong Secure Engaged (SSE). As such, modernization is the continuous process which ensures that the CAF is well positioned to address the ever-evolving threats and demands of the global security environment.¹ SSE explicitly highlights that Canada will adopt "new technologies to transform the way personnel are manage and employed"² emphasizing that "investing in our people is the single most important commitment we can make"³. However, after having served within DGMC as a Career Manager (CM) from 2019 to 2021, it is evident that there has been little investment or modernization focused on the systems and processes which enable CAF career management. This lack of investment is hindering CMs from operating at their full potential and is contributing to ineffective postings of personnel. This only further exacerbates CAF members' frustrations with their employment and negatively impacts retention.

3. There are 95 CMs for 107 different Military Occupation Structural Identification Codes (MOSID)s which encompass the management of all regular force Non Commissioned Members (NCMs) and Officers for a total of 71,500 positions⁴. CMs have the important task of employing "the right person, with the right qualifications, in the right place at the right time (R4)"⁵ in order to meet institutional needs. However, a 2019 retention survey indicated that personnel were somewhat satisfied with career management but that there was room for improvement⁶. Furthermore, the 3rd most

¹ Department of National Defence. *Advancing with purpose: The Canadian Army Modernization Strategy*". Ottawa: Canadian Army Headquarters, (2020), 1.

² Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. (Ottawa: Minister of National Defence, 2017), 15.

³ Ibid., 19.

⁴ National Defence, Chief Military Personnel "Director Military Careers, Mandate". Last accessed via DWAN 23 Jan 2022. <http://cmpapp.mil.ca/dgmc/en/career/index-dmilc.asp>

⁵ Department of National Defence, B-GL-005-100/FP-100, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication, Military Personnel Management Doctrine*. (Ottawa: Director General Military Personnel, June 2008), 5-2.

⁶ Department of National Defence, *The 2019 CAF Regular Forces Retention Survey: Descriptive Analysis*, (Ottawa: Defence Research Development Canada 2020), 29

common cited reason for leaving the CAF was postings⁷, a direct function of CMs executing R4. This paper will argue that there is a need to modernize and invest in the training, systems, and Military Establishment Structures (MES) within DGMC, since current practices are insufficient in enabling CMs to manage CAF personnel effectively. To achieve this, the paper will be broken down into three parts. The first part of this paper will focus on the need for more robust training for CMs, to ensure credibility and competency in their functions of personnel management. The second part of this paper will address the antiquated and parallel systems of communication at a CM's disposals and how they negatively impact R4. Lastly, this paper will examine how outdated MES are impacting CM's decision making and postings. We will conclude with an overall assessment of these items and provide recommendations so that DGMC can improve the centralized function of CAF personnel management.

DISCUSSION

Training Reforms

4. Although R4 is the corner stone of career management, the scope and duties of a CM also encompass a broad range of complex personnel administrative tasks. These tasks include all of the following: Posting instructions, rank change instructions, course loading identification, promotion and succession board secretariat, outside of Canada posting vetting and management, occupational interviews, and administrative reviews.

⁸Administrative reviews on their own contain a full scope of topics including: accelerated promotions, acting while so employed, reversion in rank, compassionate postings, voluntary release waivers, leave without pay, posting to transition unit and other situations which require a thorough understanding of DGMC's policies⁹.

5. The quantity and breadth of these complex tasks require substantial familiarization to policies, systems, as well as a consideration for the CAF members' files. Furthermore, many of these tasks are conducted across multiple information technology systems which also require the user to be comfortable with its functioning. As examples of technology systems, CMs are expected to utilise the Career Manager Information System (CMIS), Personnel Electronic Records Management Information System (PERMIS), Employee Member Access Application (EMAA), Electronic Admin Review (eAR) and Enterprise Resource Planning Software (Guardian). As such, it is to be expected that there be a maximum requirement for formalized training on the systems and tasks outlined above, so as to ensure that a CM can execute the full scope of their duties once posted into DGMC. However, the reality is that there is a bare minimum

⁷ Department of National Defence, *The 2019 CAF Regular Forces Retention Survey: Qualitative Analysis*, (Ottawa: Defence Research Development Canada 2020), 17.

⁸ Government of Canada. "Military Career Management". Last Modified 11 Jan 22.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/caf-members/career/military-career-managers.html>

⁹ Director Military Career Standard Operating Procedures. *Conduct of Administrative Reviews*. (Ottawa: Director General Military Careers, Dec 2020), 1.

amount of training that a CM receives before they are officially exercising the functions of personnel management.

6. The formal training received by a CM upon posting into DGMC is the following, four Defence Network Learning (DLN) courses on the utilisation of Guardian¹⁰. The intent of these courses are to familiarize CMs with this specific systems navigations functions including posting instructions and course nominations. As well, a confirmatory instructional lesson lead by DGMC staff on the releasing of posting instruction is required prior to a CM being authorised to utilise Guardian. Beyond this, there is an orientation day, however there is no other formal training on any other information systems, nor DGMC policies and their application to personnel management. The remaining of the training required to fulfil the duties of personnel management are informal and are conducted ad hoc during a handover between incoming and outgoing CMs. This handover is at their discretion and is approximately five days in length. It must cover the utilization of the remaining software systems, policies, organizational structures, posting plots and CAF personnel within their managed occupations. In some instances, incoming and outgoing CMs may not be able to conduct handovers, which leaves occupations, CMs and the CAF severely disadvantaged.

7. A 2021 report on postings identified that turnover among staff within DGMC reduced the volume of corporate knowledge retention and reduced human resource expertise.¹¹ Thus, it would behove DGMC to undertake a more formal approach to CM training. In essence, the current handover model encourages corporate knowledge to be transmitted and internalized in a short, overwhelming, and non-standardized method. The result is that CMs have dissimilar understandings of policies and a limited understanding of career management information systems. From a macro perspective, this exposes DGMC to major risks, setting the conditions for inconsistent application of policies, erosion of trust and minimizing procedural fairness for CAF members. On a micro level, routine items such as promotion messages, administrative review decisions and returns on queries from Chains of Command (CoC) are riddled with errors or misinterpretation of policies.

8. Combined, these effects profoundly damage DGMC's credibility with CAF members. "The CF personnel management environment is complex and challenging, presenting, more often than not, only one opportunity to 'get it right'. If one fails in getting it right, credibility is lost, and once lost, it is extremely difficult to regain."¹² Given the above, it is without hesitation that DGMC must invest in more robust standardized CM training, focusing on information systems mastery and policies understanding. This would increase corporate knowledge and ensure the uniform

¹⁰ Director General Military Careers. "DGMC IN/OUT Clearance APS 2021 – Welcome to DGMC". Internal Correspondence. 19 May 2021.

¹¹ Department of National Defense. *Optimize Direct Expenditures Associated with Postings and Cost Moves*. (Ottawa: Military Personnel Command, Dec 2021), 33.

¹² Department of National Defence, B-GL-005-100/FP-100, *Canadian Forces Joint Publication, Military Personnel Management Doctrine*. (Ottawa: Director General Military Personnel, June 2008), 5-1.

application of policies while better equipping all present and future CMs to execute the full breadth of their complex duties.

Stovepipe Communication Systems

9. “Director Military Careers ((DMILC), a directorate of DGMC)) mandate is to assign Regular Force personnel to meet the current and future needs of the CAF while considering individual aspirations.”¹³ To effectively meet this mandate, there is an inordinate amount of information coordination and communication which occurs between personnel and information systems. CMs must be able to review position descriptions, position openings for the next posting cycle, family dispositions such as married service couples, member’s career progression and performance to date, as well as posting and position preferences within the CMIS database. Moreover, to generate a full understanding of all these elements, a CM will interact with a member’s CoC, the senior Occupational Advisor (OA) and the member. Therefore, there is a requirement for members to be consistent in messaging their career aspirations. Arguably, the current application of the information systems combined with the communications structure, thwarts this consistency.

10. CAF members are reminded yearly to update their desired posting locations and position preferences within EMAA. As well, CoCs will circulate occupational forms on behalf of the occupational advisors to better understand a member’s career desires and aspiration. Unfortunately, the two processes operate in parallel and are not integrated within the current CMIS architecture. In essence, the occupational forms are circulated via e-mail and are collected by the OAs and are rarely shared with the CM. Members tend to favour this process over updating EMAA, because EMAA is insufficient in detail. Unfortunately, EMAA is the only information system which is linked to CMIS and capable of providing a member’s postings and position preferences to a CM.

11. Therefore, this dual process for tracking a member’s career sets the conditions for members to communicate different messages to their CoC, the OA and the CM, while also limiting the full scope of information available to a CM. Moreover, it fails to capture all of the pertinent data on individuals in one centralized repository which would facilitate information accessibility and decision making. Consequently, an integrated and centralized database made accessible to the members, the CoCs, OAs, and CMs, with different levels of view/access would streamline information sharing and data collection. In essence, EMAA could be updated to reflect the OA’s information requests and still be linked to CMIS via digital scan. This approach would eliminate stovepiped information and help present a clear understanding of a member’s overall career aspirations. Thus, an integrated system that captures all of the members desires in coordination with the inputs from the CoC and the AO would empower CMs to generate greater, more well-received R4 postings.

¹³ National Defense, Chief Military Personnel “Director Military Careers, Mandate”. Last accessed via DWAN 23 Jan 2022. <http://cmpapp.mil.ca/dgmc/en/career/index-dmilc.asp>

Outdated Military Employment Structures

12. Further complicating a CM's ability to execute R4 postings is the fact that position functions, descriptions, and training requirements within the CMIS database are inaccurate and outdated. CMIS compiles all occupational billets across the CAF and provides CMs with the position's tombstone data. This data includes, but is not limited to, the responsible occupation to fill the billet, position location, position priority, training requirements, current incumbent, parent organization, etc. CMIS is a very powerful tool, however, the information is only useful if it remains accurate. The challenge is that CAF organizations from the tactical to the strategic level are ever-evolving, changing, and restructuring to meet current/future obligations, without updating Military Employment Structures (MES) via functional authorities.¹⁴

13. For instance, in July 2012, 2 Wing, an expeditionary formation, was stood up under the Air Force Expeditionary Capability modernization concept¹⁵. 2 Wing was initially composed of an Air Command Component Unit (ACCU), an Air Expeditionary Squadron (AES) and the Excellence Readiness Centre (ERC). Today, the Unit is vastly different than its initial structure and is now composed of a Headquarters, a Mission Support Squadron (MSS), an Operational Support Squadron (OSS) and the Air Expeditionary Training Squadron (AETS)¹⁶. The problem lies in the fact that as of summer 2021, there were 22 Logistics positions at 2 Wing and none of them were attributed to their correct parent organizations, and furthermore, were identified using old nomenclatures. Thus, the current disposition in CMIS remains in accordance with the organizational structure from 2012 and does not reflect actual position titles, descriptions, and training qualification. A more recent example can be found at the Combined Joint Operations Centre (CJOC) which undertook the process of optimization on 8 Feb 2019 with the goal of realigning positions and structure to be more adaptable and fit for purpose.¹⁷ Of the 88 Log positions within the CJOC MES, none have been updated to reflect CJOCs post optimization organizational structure.

14. As such, outdated MES create disinformation and prohibits CMs from understanding current military structures, position names, functions and required qualification, therefore negatively impacting R4 postings. As such, CMs are posting CAF members into positions which are not in line with current organizational structures and operations. This is misleading to CAF members and creates confusion for CMs who are trying to optimize members' talents and R4 postings. Moreover, CMs are sending individuals to fill positions to which they may not have the required qualification to execute. On average over the last 3 years, there have been 10,000 cost move postings per

¹⁴ Department of National Defense. Defense Administration Orders and Directives 5070-1. *Military Employment Structure Framework*. (Ottawa: Chief Military Personnel, 2015)

¹⁵ Government of Canada. "Wings and Squadrons - 2 Wing History". Last Modified 20 Oct 2017. <http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/2-wing/history.page>

¹⁶ Government of Canada. "Wings and Squadrons - 2 Wing Bagotville." Last Modified 8 July 2021. <http://www.rcaf-arc.forces.gc.ca/en/2-wing/index.page>

¹⁷ Lieutenant-General Michael Rouleau. "CJOC Optimization" Internal Correspondence, Canadian Joint Operation Command, (Ottawa: ON, 8 February 2019), 1.

year¹⁸. As a result, each year approximately 15% of the CAF members are relocating to fulfill jobs for which there are uncertainties in its actual functions, qualifications, and descriptions. Given that postings are a significant source for dissatisfaction with CAF members, we must strive to maintain accurate military employment structures. Without updated military employment structures, CMs will continue to struggle to post members in accordance with R4 principals, making decisions based on outdated data, failing both the institution and the individuals they are meant to serve.

CONCLUSION

15. CMs are entrusted with the enormous task of managing CAF members' careers with credibility, transparency, equality, while ensuring the principals of R4 are applied in tandem with an individual's career aspirations. This is an overwhelmingly large task whereby CMs' decisions directly impact CAF organizations, CAF members, job satisfaction and their families. CMs cannot afford to make poor decisions or learn on the job. CAF members expect to be treated and managed within their respective occupations with a high level of competency and trust. In this respect, it is not acceptable that CMs nor CAF members and CoCs be placed in avoidable situations, dealing with inadequately trained CMs. DGMC must ensure that more robust standardized training is delivered to incoming CM on policies, their application, and the effective utilization of all CM information systems. Moreover, DGMC cannot afford to have duplicative processes and stove piped information. CAF members require modern career management systems and processes that correspond to their and the institution's needs and expectations of excellence. As such, there is an urgent need to modernize and integrate information systems with the objective of centralizing an individual's career data across all stakeholders. Lastly, MES must be updated regularly to reflect the correct institutional nomenclature, training requirements and job descriptions. Outdated information regarding established positions hinders effective decision making and generates missed opportunities to optimised R4 postings. Until such time as the CAF invests in modernizing CAF personnel management, CAF members will be misemployed or worse, members will seek alternatives outside of the uniform.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16. To increase CM effectiveness and enable R4 postings, I present the following three recommendations for consideration to the CAF for further analysis: A review of the base line corporate knowledge on systems and policies that is required to be fully functional as a CM. This review should focus on the gaps that are limiting CMs from accomplishing the scope of their duties once posted into DGMC. This should pinpoint the additional training required for CMs to be effective and competent in human resource management. The second recommendation is to form a subcommittee of past and present career managers with the objective of analysing how information system modernization can help streamline access to information while better informing decision making. The

¹⁸ Director General Military Careers. "DGMC Historical Cost Moves" Internal Correspondence. Ottawa: ON, 12 Jan 2020.

subcommittee should include information systems representatives so that the committee can explore the effective integration of systems and dissolve duplicate processes. Lastly, given the exceptional level of knowledge, training and experience required to perform personnel management, as well as the loss of corporate knowledge within DGMC due to postings, the CAF should explore ways reduce turn over within DGMC. Integral to this, the CAF should explore the possibility of employing civilians as CMs instead of military personnel as a potential solution to alleviate turn over. Combined, these three recommendations and their further analysis and implementation, may well be the salient points towards modernizing career management functions in the CAF.

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