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Enrolment of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces

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Enrolment of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces

AIM

1. While inroads have been made, enrolment of women has plateaued in the RCAF and general aviation over the past ten years.¹ In addition, the current 16% of women that make up the CAF are predominantly in the support trades of "resource management support clerks, supply technicians, logistics officers, medical technicians, nursing officers, and cooks."² This paper will look at what further measures need to occur to increase female presence and roles in the CAF. The demand for women has only increased given the current shortfall of the CAF by 10,000 personnel, the legal requirements under the Employment Equity Act and pressures to support United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325.³ While the CAF is no worse than civilian industry to hire women in not traditional roles and occupations, given the state of the force and the current government's mandate, there must be a continued push to increase and retain the number of women in the military.⁴

INTRODUCTION

2. The Canadian government has been transparent in their support of UNSCR1325 adopted in 2000, "which affirms the vital role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and urges all actors to increase women and gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts."⁵ The UNs goal is 15% of military contingents to be female by 2028; it is currently at 5%.⁶ Strong Secure Engaged states that the CAFs goal is to have 25% female members by 2026, which is unlikely to be met given the current numbers.⁷ The CAF is nearing a tipping point to maintain capabilities and train the next generation

¹ David Seligson, *Women and Aviation – Quality Jobs, Attraction and Retention* (International Labour Office-Geneva, Working Paper, 2020): 2.

https://www.ilo.org/sector/Resources/publications/WCMS_740235/lang--en/index.htm

² Canada. "2016 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada Report 5 – Canadian Forces Recruitment and Retention – National Defence," Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Nov 2016, https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201611_05_e_41834.html

³ Under the *Employment Equity Act*, the Canadian Armed Forces must identify and eliminate employment barriers and take measures to ensure that women and other designated groups are appropriately represented, taking into account the need for operational effectiveness. United Nations Security Council. "Resolution 1325 (2000)," 31 Oct 2000.

⁴ As examples female pilots are both approx. 5% for Civilian and military. Aircraft maintainers are greater for the military at approx. 8% and civilian at 3%. Air Traffic Controllers are 17% for civilians and approximately 8% for the CAF. Steve Staedler, *Promoting Women's Roles in Aviation Maintenance* (Skies, 1 Jun 2018). <https://skiesmag.com/news/promoting-womens-roles-aviation-maintenance/> and Kendra Kincaid, *Serving a World in Motion* (Wings, 2 Oct 2018). <https://www.wingsmagazine.com/serving-a-world-in-motion-15845/> and Lise Bourgon, *Update on Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS Agenda* (Toronto, 13 Jan 2022).

⁵ Government of Canada, "Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations," last accessed 15 Jan 2022, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/elsie_initiative-initiative_elsie.aspx?lang=eng

⁶ United Nations Security Council. "Resolution 1325 (2000)," 31 Oct 2000. And United Nations Peacekeeping, "Women in Peacekeeping," last accessed 10 Jan 2022, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/women-peacekeeping>

⁷ Canada, Department of National Defence. *Strong Secure Engaged*. Canada's Defence Policy. 2017.

with the magnitude of current staffing shortfalls.⁸ The Chief of Defence Staff issued a Reconstitution Phase directive in 2021 that emphasizes the importance of recruitment and training in order to be able to maintain operational capabilities.⁹

3. This paper will review the enrolment of women in three categories: recruitment, training, and retention. It will discuss what improvements should occur, looking to the work of other militaries that have managed to increase female members to numbers higher than that of the CAF. Areas where the CAF can compete with civilian industries, will also be tackled. Not only is it critical to recruit and train more women, but a reduction in harassment and improving pathways to leadership for women must take place.¹⁰ While many initiatives are in progress, there are still areas for improvement. Given the competition for personnel that all industries are vying for, the pressure to recruit is immediate.

DISCUSSION

4. **Recruitment:** The CAF has done an excellent job of increasing female presence in advertisements for recruitment, but more can be achieved. Where female enrolment is highest is at reserve units.¹¹ This higher reserve enrolment is happening for several reasons: armouries are embedded within communities, reserves allow flexible part-time work and geographic stability. The regular force still functions on a model of work that caters to a family of one working parent, expecting the family to move every three to five years in support of the military member. This model is not surprisingly having difficulty recruiting and retaining personnel overall and specifically women. The reserves have been able to counter this narrative, and the CAF needs to adjust and capitalize on this if the recruitment of women is a true priority.

5. Geographic stability is essential for recruits and is a common reason for releases from the CAF for serving members.¹² The institution has been slowly implementing "The Journey" program designed to address quality of life concerns. "The current policies that support CAF members were created in a time when they aligned with the CAF support structure of many years ago which allowed for minimal disruptions for families relocating across the country."¹³ The Journey acknowledges that "today's CAF requires new, flexible policies and systems to reflect the realities and challenges of modern

⁸ Lee Berthiaume, *Military bases Struggling with Personnel Shortages, internal review finds* (The Star, 24 Dec 2020). <https://www.thestar.com/politics/2020/12/24/military-bases-struggling-with-personnel-shortages-internal-review-finds.html>

⁹ Chief of the Defence Staff. "CDS Planning Directive for Canadian Armed Forces Reconstitution." National Defence Headquarters, 9 July 2021.

¹⁰ New Zealand. "Maximizing Opportunities for Military Women in the New Zealand Defence Force," Evaluation Division: Wellington, Feb 2014, 7. <https://www.defence.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/1b0daa8fb0/maximising-opportunities-military-women-nzdf.pdf>

¹¹ Canada. "Women in the Forces," last accessed 09 Jan 2022, Women in the CAF | Canadian Armed Forces

¹² P. Cheng, *The 2019 CAF Regular Force Retention Survey Qualitative Analysis* (Defence Research and Development, 2019). 21.

¹³ Chief of Military Personnel, "Employment Model," intranet last accessed 20 Jan 2022. <http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/en/support/employment-model.page>

Canadian society."¹⁴ The long-term objectives are to introduce an adaptive career path leading to a new employment model.¹⁵ The intent is to enable members to transition between full and part-time as desired, but the necessity to change policy has stalled the implementation of these proposed changes.

6. The CAF job descriptions of all trades need to be reviewed. The civilian industry has found that women were unintentionally being screened out by using specific terms like tough, demanding, stressful or time-consuming.¹⁶ In addition, it has been found that if an applicant does not have all the capabilities listed, men will still apply, whereas women will not.¹⁷ Therefore, reviewing what the CAF is asking for with what is required may show that many female applicants are unintentionally being screened out. In addition, engagement with female civilians with incentives like the Women in Force Program is critical to ensure that women see the possibilities of choosing a career in the CAF.¹⁸

7. The recommendations in the report completed by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada in 2016 regarding CAF Recruitment and Retention should be followed. Specifically, the CAF "should establish appropriate representation goals for women for each occupation. It should also develop and implement measures to achieve them."¹⁹ While targets have been contentious, there is a requirement to track and prioritize enrolling women who have met the entrant standards.²⁰ Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPPRA) has created occupation-specific intake goals for the regular force for 2022 using an employment equity external intake goal calculator with the principle that all occupations should contribute to the CAF goal of 25% equitably.²¹

8. Civilian aviation agencies have also struggled to recruit more female pilots; their female cadre currently sits at 5%, identical to the RCAF.²² "The social arrangements in

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Grover, Vijay. *Second Generation Gender Bias: Invisible Barriers Holding Women Back in Organizations* (International Journal of Applied Research, Volume 1 Issue 4, 2015): 2.

¹⁷ Herminia Ibarra and Robin J. Ely, and Deborah M. Kolb. *Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers* (Harvard Business Review, September 2013).

¹⁸ Bourgon, Lise. "The CAF Path Towards its 25.1% Employment Equity Objective: A Look Through the Lenses of Attraction and Recruitment." *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 22 No 1 (Winter 2019): 12.

¹⁹ Canada. "2016 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada Report 5 – Canadian Forces Recruitment and Retention – National Defence," Office of the Auditor General of Canada, Nov 2016: 5.34. https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201611_05_e_41834.html

²⁰ *Ibid.* 5.34.

²¹ Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis. "Occupation-Specific Intake Goals (Reg F)." 2021.

²² Anna Elizabeth (Benge) Coles. *Does Second Generation Gender Bias Exist in Commercial Aviation? Pilot Experience and Perceptions* (Journal of Asia Entrepreneurship and Sustainability, Volume 17, Issue 2 Feb 2021): 99. And Lise Bourgon. "Update on Implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the WPS Agenda." 13 Jan 2022.

aircraft, 'with men seated and women bending to serve,' have not varied significantly" for civilian agencies or militaries.²³

Many issues contribute to the poor retention rate of women in civil aviation, including wage disparities and unequal access to premium wage rates, sexual discrimination and sexual harassment, hazardous working conditions, insufficient attention to health and wellbeing and limited training opportunities.²⁴

Civilian women continue to be underpaid by 0.87 to their male peers.²⁵ "If women earned the same amount as men within occupations, their average wages would increase by an average of \$2.86 per hour. As a result, the gender wage ratio would reach 0.97."²⁶

9. Pay and training are where the CAF can truly shine. Wage parity within each trade is assured, and training is paid both for trade-specific and university education. A civilian will spend over \$100,000 to become a commercial pilot as one example of the cost of training.²⁷ The CAF needs to show what makes the job different from civilian agencies and what makes it better. This advertising can include the free training, wage parity that members have, and the fact that they will be serving Canadians. The younger generation wants to make a living and find a career that gives them purpose.²⁸ The CAF can undoubtedly fill this desire between serving Canadians and in a peacekeeping role.

10. **Training:** Multiple agencies, including the New Zealand (NZ) military, have found most harassment and bullying incidents in recruit training.²⁹ NZ Armed Forces have noted that the implementation of Bystander Intervention Training has assisted in reducing occurrences.³⁰ The CAF should implement a similar program for all recruits. This education would cater well to the current Culture Change that the CAF is undergoing.

11. **Retention:** Unpaid childcare in Canadian society falls predominantly to the female caregiver.³¹ The CAF cannot change societal trends but can accommodate female members who take on this responsibility. Military and civilian aircrew are "often required

²³ David Seligson, *Women and Aviation*... 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 15.

²⁵ Statistics Canada, "Study: Women in Canada: Women and paid work," 8 Mar 2017:1 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/170308/dq170308b-eng.htm>

²⁶ *Ibid.* 2.

²⁷ Liam MacDonald. *The State of Civilian Flight Schools and its Relevance to the RCAF: Challenges, Financial Pressures, International Students, and Recommendations* (Defence Research and Development Canada and Centre for Operational Research and Analysis. Oct 2021): 11

²⁸ FOND, "What Millennials Want in the Workplace: A Purpose Driven Culture." 21 Nov 2019. <https://www.fond.co/blog/what-millennials-want-in-the-workplace/>

²⁹ New Zealand. "Maximizing Opportunities for Military Women in the New Zealand Defence Force," Evaluation Division: Wellington, Feb 2014: 41. <https://www.defence.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/1b0daa8fb0/maximising-opportunities-military-women-nzdf.pdf>

³⁰ *Ibid.* 43.

³¹ Caroline Criado Perez. *Invisible Women*. (New York: Abrams Press, 2019): 52.

to spend much time away from home, which can be more difficult for women who often undertake an unequal share of unpaid family care work and have other domestic commitments."³² Women require flexibility between work schedules, part-time versus full time and length of deployments.

12. Multiple studies have shown that women tend to leave the full-time workforce when the weight of childcare falls to them. "Men have formulated neotraditional contingency plans that are still predicated on the availability of a spouse willing to eventually scale back work ambition and financial independence to provide family caregiving."³³ The US military has found that 28% more of women released before retirement than men.³⁴ The US military noted, "six factors that were reported to influence female active-duty service member's separation from the military: work schedules, deployments, organizational culture, family planning, sexual assault, and dependent care."³⁵ Therefore the CAF needs to enable women to transition between full and part-time as their responsibilities in their personal life evolves.

13. Given the cost to train women, the CAFs' best interest is to retain them until they are ready to retire on their terms and not due to extenuating circumstances that could be accommodated. The NZ Military calculates that the higher rates of female attrition compared to men is costing them \$100 million a year.³⁶ Some changes like flexibility on schedules and permitting long career courses to be done virtually when possible would be examples that would potentially increase retention. The NZ review:

Found that there is a need to take an increasingly individual approach to management of careers, rather than benchmarking against cohorts, as women who have taken parental leave need to be evaluated against others who have a similar amount of active service time in order to be competitive for limited promotional opportunities.³⁷

The CAF could also benefit by implementing these NZ initiatives.

14. Previously serving female members released from the CAF in the last five years should be offered a return for full-time or part-time employment. This initiative would capitalize on trained personnel that may be in a place in their

³² David Seligson, *Women and Aviation*... 11.

³³ Kathleen Gerson, *The Unfinished Revolution: How a New Generation is Reshaping Family, Work, and Gender in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 175.

³⁴ Meghann Myers. *The Military Needs a Real Plan to Recruit and Retain Women, report finds*. Military Times, 20 May 2020. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/05/20/the-military-needs-a-real-plan-to-recruit-and-retain-women-report-finds/>

³⁵ United States. Government of Accountability Office. "Female Active-Duty Personnel: Guidance and Plans Needed for Recruitment and Retention Efforts," GAO-20-61: Reports and Testimonies, 19 May 2020: 28. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-61>

³⁶ New Zealand. "Maximizing Opportunities for Military Women in the New Zealand Defence Force," Evaluation Division: Wellington, Feb 2014: 9. <https://www.defence.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/1b0daa8fb0/maximising-opportunities-military-women-nzdf.pdf>

³⁷ *Ibid.* 31.

lives where they are better situated to return to working for the military.³⁸ This observation was made by the Auditor General in 2016 and is an incentive that other militaries are also considering.

15. Harassment in the workplace needs to be removed to retain women. The US military,

found that even sexual jokes, whistles, suggestive looks being commonplace in a working environment were enough to decrease women's intention to reenlist. Overall, sexual harassment is strongly and repeatedly linked to lower job satisfaction and decreased intention to remain in the military.³⁹

As the CAF is undergoing a Culture Change with several initiatives, this paper will not belabour this point.

³⁸ Canada. "2016 Fall Reports of the Auditor General.... 5.34.

³⁹ Juanita Firestone, and Justin D. Jackett and Richard J. Harris. *Testing Relationships between Sex of Respondent, Sexual Harassment and Intentions to Reenlist in the U.S. Military*. (Public Administration Research, Vol 1 No 1, 28 Jan 2012): 1.

CONCLUSION

16. While the CAF has been leaning forward in recruiting women and is on par with civilian agencies for women in not traditional roles, there is still work to be done. There is no quick fix to make the desired objective of 25%, but instead, multiple measures in the recruitment, training, and retention categories are required. Studies show that the performance differences between men and women are more similar than different. The "solution to parity is through a review of organizational structures, corporate ethos and behaviours ...to address the conditions that undermine women and reinforce gender stereotypes."⁴⁰ There is unanimity that increasing the number of women in the CAF is the right thing to do. Now, the CAF needs to not simply open the door but inform the Canadian public about all that a career in the military can provide. Furthermore, to ensure a welcoming work environment for all CAF members from enrolment to retirement.

RECOMMENDATION

17. Below is a summary of all recommendations:

- a. Capitalize on reserve recruiting.
- b. Allow greater flexibility to transition between full and part-time employment.
- c. All job descriptions must be reviewed to ensure unintentional biases are not being conveyed.
- d. Continued use of programs like the Women in Force Program.
- e. Set goals for the number of women for each occupation.
- f. Initiate advertising and initiatives regarding recruiting to focus on benefits, free training available, and the value in service to the nation.
- g. Bystander Intervention Training be implemented for all recruits.
- h. Female members released from the CAF in the last five years should be offered a return for full-time or part-time employment.
- i. Allow greater flexibility of virtual attendance on long career courses when able.
- j. Continue work on creating a harassment-free work environment.

⁴⁰ Anna Elizabeth (Benge) Coles. *Does Second Generation...*103.

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