



Take It or Leave It: CFHA's Uncompromising Control of RHUs

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Exercise Solo Flight

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Take It or Leave It: CFHA's Uncompromising Control of RHUs

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), similarly to members of other Western militaries, are required to relocate with their families frequently. The constant moves are conducted to gain breadth of experience, complete requisite gateway training, and allow opportunities for others to move through the same career path. According to The Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs third report on the issues of social and economic challenges facing members of the Canadian Forces, “frequent moves are an inevitable part of military life, but they still generate considerable stress, especially for growing families that are uprooted again and again.”¹ According to Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) 5024, DND Living Accommodation, “Federal government policy supports the provision of DND living accommodation for CAF members if the private sector marketplace does not provide sufficient suitable living accommodation, the work site is isolated, or there is an operational requirement”² The military housing portfolio is managed the Canadian Forces Housing Agency (CFHA), a special operating agency (SOA), on behalf of the Department of National Defence (DND). This paper will seek to answer if the current CFHA allocation processes of Residential Housing Units (RHUs) are optimized to provide support to military member and their families during relocation. It will draw from a breadth of academic research, evaluations of the military housing program, Canadian Armed Forces Occupant Surveys, the current defence policy, respective defence administrative orders and directives (DAODs), and defence academic journals and media reports on the subject. This paper will identify that the CFHA's RHU allocation policies are further exasperating the stressful impacts on military members and their families during relocation. It will do this by outlining the CFHA's mission, the military housing program and its history, changing housing requirements and demographics, current allocation practices, impacts to military families during relocation, CFHA's limitations and constraints, and potential allocation process amendments. The paper will not cover in detail the condition of the current housing portfolio, the pricing of RHUs, or the support to current occupants. The paper will focus on the allocation of RHUs, formerly known as PMQs (Private Military Quarters), which are unfurnished living accommodations meant for single members up to large families. Single furnished accommodations, commonly known as ‘shacks’ will not be discussed, as these are frequently used for transient quarters during training, or accommodations for new recent entrants, and thus their allocation is a separate issue. The shortage of accommodations will be discussed, on the periphery, because if there was a surplus or sufficient supply of accommodations, then poor allocation processes would have a negligible effect. When there is a severe shortage, that can be seen today, then poor allocation processes will have a magnified impact. According to the evaluation of Military Housing report, conducted during Fiscal Year

¹ The Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. Chapter III The Housing Crisis. NDVA Committee Report. Ottawa: 1998.

² Canada. DAOD 5024-0, DND Living Accommodation. Department of National Defence. Defence Administrative Orders and Directives. Ottawa: 2007.

(FY) 2020/21 by Assistant Deputy Minister (Review Services) (ADM(RS)) “The Military Housing Program enables operational readiness by ensuring suitable residential rental housing is available to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members when and where duty demands.”³ In order to effectively enable operational readiness, soldiers require a sense of stability and predictability within their personal lives. The current allocation practices of the military housing program are not creating a predictable situation, but further creating stress and instability which lowers operational effectiveness of CAF members and the organization as a whole.

Why this is Important Now

This topic is extremely relevant at the time of writing due to multiple contemporary issues facing the CAF. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and a more aggressive China has brought the world’s attention to the renewed great power competition. This has been shown by large scale military conflict, nuclear saber-rattling, increase in defense spending, and deterioration of peace talks and international protocols. The CAF Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), General Eyre summarized this by stating in a 2022 interview, “We’re facing a much more dangerous world as we go forward”.⁴ Canada’s requirement for a capable defence force is clear, yet the CAF is experiencing a crippling personnel crisis due to the compounding issues of COVID-19 aftermath, lack of deployments, and senior leader ethics scandal. The military is in a talent competition with the civilian workforce to fill the gaps left by a retiring ageing population, and higher demand for workers to keep pace with economic growth. As of early 2023, the majority of Canadians are suffering financially from rampant inflation, volatile housing markets, and the increasing overall cost of living.⁵ Recruitment and retention are key issues of the recently released CAF Reconstitution order, yet the CAF is still being asked to do more with less, further driving burnt-out members from the force faster than they can be recruited and trained. With approximately one quarter of CAF members relocating each year, the current extreme prices in housing markets surrounding bases have led to several high-profile media stories of soldiers living in their vehicles, campgrounds, or being recommended to approach charities for accommodations.⁶ These media highlights demonstrate the lack of affordability and supply of accommodations that CAF members are required to navigate routinely as they relocate.

³ Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. Evaluation of Military Housing. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

⁴ Tumilty, Ryan. “Canada’s top general says world is becoming much more dangerous”. National Post. 04 April 2022.

⁵ Raycraft, Richard. “Military seeks public input on how to cope with low recruitment and a world of threats”. CBC News. Politics. 09 March 2023.

⁶ Lee Berthiaume. “Canadian Forces urged to contact Habitat for Humanity amid housing crunch”. Global News. The Canadian Press. 23 May 2022.

Applying Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to the needs of CAF members, the bottom three levels of the pyramid all centre around the foundational requirement for consistent housing.⁷ On the bottom level, the physiological need for shelter is a foundational human requirement to support a member and their family. The second rung of safety needs, includes living in a secure environment and securing your belongings and family. The third level up includes belonging, which relevantly points to the surrounding military communities that supports members and their families throughout the year and during operational requirements. Maintaining a secure and affordable residence is beyond a 'nice-to-have' it is a foundational human requirement, and without it, it cannot be expected that CAF members will be or remain operationally effective.

The CAF follows a *Mission First, People Always* mentality that is capture in *Trusted to Serve*, and *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE), Canada's defence policy⁸. Which alludes to the CAF always taking care of its people, to ensure they are able to accomplish the mission on behalf the country. There is an intangible contract with the CAF and its members, that if members are willing to serve, and pay the ultimate price, the institution will take care of you and your family, including your basic necessities. The trust factor has been disrupted in recent years, as the government, DND and its senior leadership are not following the 'People Always' portion in current policy making. This lack of trust in the institution is a contributing factor in members turning to alternate career paths outside the CAF.⁹ If the CAF is going to continue with the model of constantly relocating its personnel, it must be able to effectively support them in securing reasonable accommodations.

The Military Housing Program and CFHA

The Military Housing Program is the program that manages the accommodations portfolio and the accommodations services and support to occupants. Its goal is to ensure "suitable residential rental housing is available to CAF members when and where duty demands."¹⁰ The Military Housing program contributes to two of SSE's initiatives; improving housing for CAF personnel and develop a comprehensive Military Family Plan to stabilize family life for CAF members and their families who frequently have to relocate.¹¹ Aligned with, DAOD 5024 (Living Accommodations), the military housing

⁷ Mcleod, Saul. "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs". Simply Psychology. 21 March 2023.

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

⁹ Smith, Rita. "Loss of trust will doom military, lawyer for CAF members says". Road Warrior News. 3 May 2023.

¹⁰ Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. *Evaluation of Military Housing*. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

¹¹ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: 2017.

program intends to provide rental options to CAF members if the work locations is isolate, there is an operational requirement or there is not sufficient suitable accommodations offered by market. The National Joint Council's *Isolated Posts and Government Housing Directive, 2017*, "reinforces the role of Federal departments to provide suitable living accommodations to employees posted to isolate locations."

The DND housing portfolio includes approximately 11,700 RHUs that are located between 27 different locations across the country.¹² It is estimated that they serve one fifth of CAF members.¹³ Occupation of RHUs are currently hovering at 100% across the country except for those houses undergoing maintenance or renovations. Demand is historically higher at bases and wings closer to major population centers or in more Northern/isolated locations. The demand for RHUs by CAF members has fluctuated with the economy, value of the dollar, and state of the local housing markets. The housing portfolio has not stayed consistent, but it has seen a consistent lack of attention and funding since its creation in the 1940s.

The majority of the DND housing portfolio was built between 1940-1960's, where DND had approximately 20,000 RHUs.¹⁴ These houses were built to support Canadian citizens who had to relocate to support war efforts at home, as well as to support returning soldiers for overseas.¹⁵ There has not been major investment in building of new RHUs since the 1960's. The houses were managed by separate and respective bases and wings until 1996, where the portfolio's management was consolidated under CFHA in 1996. According to the NVDA committee report, "in 1996, the Armed Forces Council reaffirmed the principle that the Canadian Forces will ensure access to housing for all military families."¹⁶ Military bases were not seen as glamorous or luxurious, as the states of the residences were often poor, with poor insulation, electrical wiring, and outdated fixtures. Living in RHU's was seen as a necessity, but the sense of community often brought support and belonging to its residents. From the late 1990's onwards the housing portfolio was deliberately decreased until 2017.¹⁷ According to a *Daily Commercial News and Construction Record*, 2002, "CFHA has already disposed of 2,000 dilapidated houses... and plans to get rid of another 4,000 such units over the next three years. The residential selloff will reduce...to 8,000 from 19,000, most of them located at

¹² Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. Evaluation of Military Housing. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

¹³ Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. Evaluation of Military Housing. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

¹⁴ Catherine Wade. "Wartime Housing Limited, 1941-1947; Canadian Housing Policy at the Crossroads". University of British Columbia. 1984.

¹⁵

¹⁶ The Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. Chapter III The Housing Crisis. NDVA Committee Report. Ottawa: 1998.

¹⁷(Unknown). "Are Convicts Faring Better than Soldiers? Military Families Living in Squalor, MPs Say." 2000. *Daily Commercial News and Construction Record* 73 (70) April 2000.

isolated bases where there is no private-sector alternative.”¹⁸ The downsizing was not due to demand, but the enormous cost it would have taken to bring the houses up to minimal health standards, due to their deplorable state. The insufficient budget allocated for maintenance and renovation had to be directed at fewer residences. Increase in ‘off-base’ options as urban areas expanded and the increase in CAF salaries, dulled the effects of this massive downsizing in the portfolio. These effects were not felt until 2017, when there was a massive spike in demand for military housing as house prices in Canada skyrocketed. The figure below shows the decrease in the housing profile and contrasts it the sharp incline in member demand.

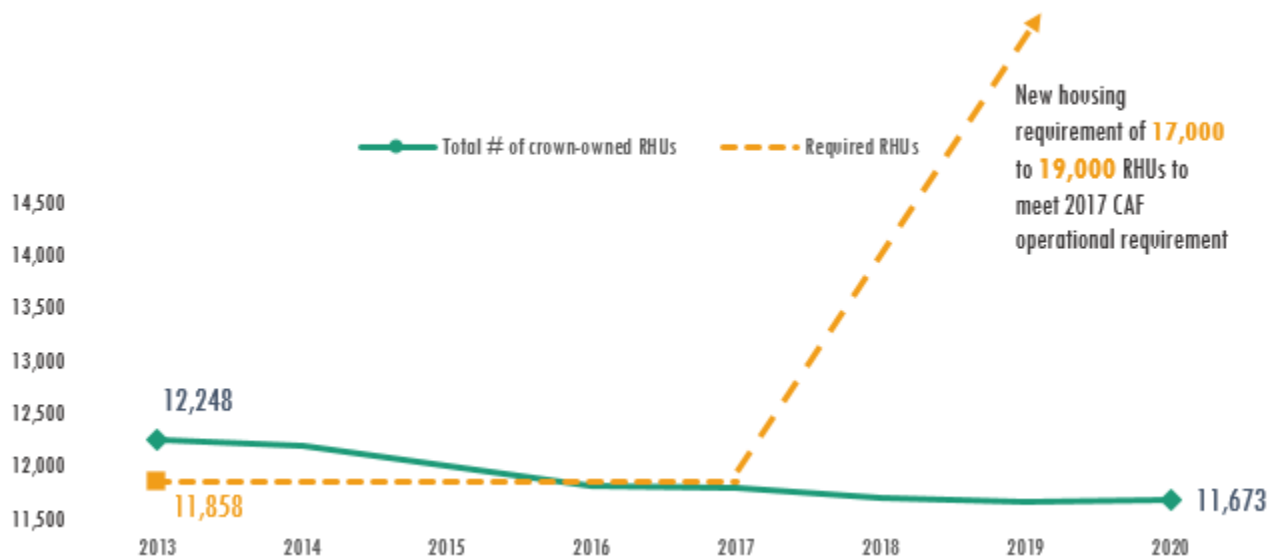


Fig. 1 The number of RHUs in portfolio has gradually decreased since 2013, while the number of RHUs required to meet Departmental Housing Requirements has increased.¹⁹

The CAF and CFHA are in the midst of building additional units and securing alternate means of supporting CAF members. In the past five years only 132 units have been constructed. According to a recent figure supplied by DND, “nearly 4,500 service members and their families who applied for military housing were sitting on a waiting list administered by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency in July (2022).”²⁰

According to DAOD 5024, CFHA’s principal role is to “develop and implement procedures for administering, operating and managing the unfurnished DND living accommodation

¹⁸ (Unknown). "Are Convicts Faring Better than Soldiers? Military Families Living in Squalor, MPs Say." 2000. *Daily Commercial News and Construction Record* 73 (70) April 2000.

¹⁹ Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. Evaluation of Military Housing. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

²⁰ Lee Berthiaume. "Nearly 4,500 Canadian Armed Forces members, families waiting for military housing". CBC News Politics. 3 October 2004.

portfolio”.²¹ Formed in 1996 as a special operating agency, it manages the housing portfolio on behalf of DND, including recommending capital and maintenance projects for RHUs and setting the charges of RHUs, as well as managing occupant administrative services. CFHA is led by a civilian CEO, has just under 300 civilian employees, and as an organization promotes its dedication to open, communication, trust, and transparency.²² It has been recognized through various reports to be effectively managed and structured, and according to its annual report, “was recognized by Excellence Canada (EC) by achieving certification at the platinum level and being a recipient of a Canada Award for Excellence (CAE).” This points to the organization effectively being able to manage its portfolio and complete its tasks. Occupant surveys suggest high satisfaction rates due to the lower than market rental rate, rapid response for maintenance, and ease of departure upon posting.²³ What the occupant surveys do not capture are the stressful experiences of the members and their families who are not allocated an RHU and are dragged through a stressful period of uncertainty and ambiguity.

CFHA Allocation Processes

Allocation Processes are able to be found by clients online on the CFHA website but are not captured in a formalized document that is accessible to the public. The three main factors of being allocated a RHU is the client’s priority, respective family size, and first-come-first serve basis.

There are three priority levels of prospective RHU occupants. Priority 1 personnel are regular force or full-time reservists, and foreign military exchange members who are moving from outside the region and have not secured a residence. Priority 2 are the same group as Priority 1, but they already reside in the area. Priority 3 consists of government of Canada civilian employees. The priority seems straight forward, but upon further investigation can negatively affect members in certain circumstances.

The first-come-first-serve factor of RHU allocation consists of when a member submits their completed application for an RHU. To submit a completed application the member must first have received a posting message. A posting message is the formal document, which gives financial authority to the member to conduct their relocation administration, including selling their current residence, and begin searching for a future residence. The member does not have any control of when they receive their posting message. It is ‘cut’ or created by the member’s specific career management organization. The bulk of posting messages are sent to members between 1 March – 15 April annually, but it is very common for posting messages to be cancelled, recalled, or sent late to account for changes in the various trade posting plots. Senior command positions and

²¹ Canada. DAOD 5024-0, DND Living Accommodation. Department of National Defence. Defence Administrative Orders and Directives. Ottawa: 2007.

²² Environics Research. Canadian Forces Housing Agency. “The Canadian Armed Forces Occupant Survey 2020”. Canadian Forces Housing Agency. March 2020.

²³ Environics Research. Canadian Forces Housing Agency. “The Canadian Armed Forces Occupant Survey 2020”. Canadian Forces Housing Agency. March 2020.

appointments often entail an early posting message. “First Come, First Serve allocation provides equal but not necessarily equitable access for CAF members who may have a greater need for military housing such as new entrants and junior officers.”²⁴ The earlier a posting message the greater the chance of securing military housing.

Household size comprises the size of a member’s family, or the number of their dependents. Though the size of family does not directly correspond to a larger or smaller house, but to how many bedrooms it contains. There are three-bedroom RHUs that are much larger than some four-bedroom RHUs. For example, a regular force member, their spouse, and a dependent child would qualify for a three-bedroom residence. Once they have received their posting message, and subsequently completed and submitted the RHU application, then they would be placed in priority of when the application was received for three-bedroom houses. It was found in a housing evaluation that, “Allocations are made based on the documented family size in the posting message, but these do not necessarily reflect CAF members’ current living situations (e.g., multi-generational or blended families).”²⁵ This allocation process does not capture the GBA+ lenses, that the military strives to apply in supporting its members.

According to the website, after you apply a member will receive “either an acknowledgement of the receipt of your application, a waiting list message or an offer of housing within 72 hours of us receiving your completed application.”²⁶ Meaning, if an RHU is available, you will receive an offer, otherwise you are told that you are on the waiting list. Members are not told where on the waiting list they are, or how many are above them, unless the housing manager decides to divulge it over the phone. Results of a military housing evaluation concluded that “the extent of unmet demand is not fully known due to the lack of reliability in waitlist data sources. Focus groups indicated that waitlists are inconsistently updated across locations and may not reflect true demand.”²⁷ At this point members wait until they are contacted by CFHA with an RHU offer. They are not contacted if they move up the list, or if it is unlikely that they will receive an offer before their Change of Strength (COS) date. It is common for a member to receive an offer for an RHU, multiple years after they have relocated, and have found alternate accommodations.

In accordance with the CFHA occupant’s handbook, existing tenants of RHUs, must give CFHA a minimum of 30 days’ notice to vacate an RHU.²⁸ Once an occupant

²⁴ Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. Evaluation of Military Housing. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

²⁵ Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. Evaluation of Military Housing. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

²⁶ Canadian Forces Housing Agency. Military Housing Website. Services and Benefits for the Military. Last Updated 1 May 2023.

²⁷ Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. Evaluation of Military Housing. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

²⁸ Canadian Forces Housing Agency. Occupant Handbook. April 2022.

vacates, contracted services will conduct maintenance and potentially renovation to the residence. If the prior tenants had resided there for more than two years, the entire house is painted and cleaned before the next tenants arrive. If the house is scheduled for overdue renovations, it could undergo renovations for months before being available for a client. Once renovations are complete the residence undergoes a survey to set the new rental rate. Only once this rate is set, will the residence become available. Clients who are on the waiting list, are not informed, of any of the upcoming residences, or any details about them, until they receive an offer.

When a client receives an offer, it comes in the form of an email. The email states that they are being offered a residence, it gives an address, instructions on how to accept the offer, and what to do next for occupation. The offer includes number of bedrooms, and square footage. An example of an offer email, and an attached offer can be viewed as appendixes below. The offers must be accepted within three days, or they are considered denied. If an offer is denied, then the member will be moved to the ‘bottom’ of the priority list, and that residence will be offered to the next member in priority. These offers can come at any time and are not aligned to a House Hunting Trip (HHT). The member cannot find or access additional information about the house. Oftentimes, members will look at the house on online mapping software, such as google maps, or if they know someone local, may ask for them to drive by the residence. The RHU offer does not give sufficient information or time for a member and their family to make a reasonable decision, if it will be a suitable residence for their family. This creates a situation where members are forced into accepting inadequate dwellings, or gamble on denying it, and placed at the bottom of the priority list. The housing managers, respective local base/wing manager, have some flexibility in how they apply the allocation procedures. This flexibility has created non standardized management of waiting lists, and allocation procedures. There are obvious amendments to the RHU Offer procedure that could be amended to optimize the client experience, which will be discussed below.

House Hunting Trips

House Hunting Trips are a relocation entitlement designed to give a member and their family the opportunity to secure reasonable accommodation.²⁹ The typical length of an HHT is seven days including travel, which gives 5 days for securing a residence. The three options from members are typically to buy, rent on the market, or go into an RHU. If a member does not secure a residence, they may have to leave their family in their current location and relocate by themselves. This is called, Imposed Restriction (IR), and “is an option that CAF members opt for if their dependents remain in the current location and don't choose to move.”³⁰ HHTs are important experiences for families to become familiar with their new surroundings, and an opportunity to investigate schools, daycare, family doctors, etc. HHTs are known to be a stressful time if a member has not yet

²⁹ Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Armed Forces Relocation Directive (CAFRD). 1 March 2022.

³⁰ Canada. Department of National Defence. Canadian Armed Forces Relocation Directive (CAFRD). 1 March 2022.

secured their residence. If a member has not been offered, nor accepted an offer on an RHU, they will have to buy, rent, or be separated from their family. If members are unable to secure a residence, they may be approved to extend their HHT, or take a second HHT at a later date.

If a member has accepted an offer on an RHU, they are not able to conduct an HHT, because they have already secured their residence. They are only entitled a Destination inspection Trip (DIT), which is shorter, and their family are not covered to attend. During a DIT, there is no apparatus for the member to view the inside of the RHU if it is occupied. If a member cannot afford to buy a home, they have not yet been offered an RHU, and do not want to live separately from their family, then they are forced to rent on the civilian market. Even though by policy, living in RHUs should not be a ‘benefit’, and RHU rates should be equivalent to market rates, RHUs are significantly less expensive. Landlords generally expect a minimum of a one-year lease agreement. If a member signs a lease for a civilian residence, they are moved down to priority 2, and will likely not receive an RHU offer. There is not sufficient information, nor are the waitlists transparent enough to provide members and their families the information to make deliberate well-informed financial and familial decisions. There will be less and less CAF member who can afford to purchase houses, as the pace of pay raises has not kept pace with inflation, housing markets have increased significantly in urban areas post pandemic, cost of borrowing has risen, and changes to Post Living Differential (PLD).

Impacts of Allocation Policies

There are several negative impacts the lack of information on residences, and non-standardized management of wait lists has on members. According to an evaluation of military housing, “Allocation policies have led to potentially higher numbers of CAF members on Imposed Restriction (IR) due to CAF members on priority 1 waitlists being allocated an RHU before CAF members on priority 2 waitlists.”³¹ With the massive shortage discussed in military housing, those on priority 2 waitlists are unlikely to ever receive an offer. For members to remain on priority 1 list, they relocate on IR, and are forced to separate from their families. Military members are gone from their families for extended periods already due to deployments, tasks, exercises and individual training. Creating the conditions to separate families even further will surely lead to familial friction, and eventual release from the forces.

The relation of number of bedrooms to family size is appropriate in principle. It makes the connection that the larger a family, the more rooms there should be. What this does not take into account, is that just because a house has four bedrooms as opposed to three, that is a larger house. Due to the demographics of CAF members living in RHUs, they are likely to have younger school aged children. There are additional factors other than number of bedrooms, such as the number of bathrooms, the size of yard, if there is a

³¹ Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. Evaluation of Military Housing. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

driveway, and the location of the house. Parents of young children would rather not live in a row house that backs onto a busy main street. These factors are not taken into consideration during the allocation process. Members may not even understand these implications, because there is so little information that appears on the offer. Ideally there is additional information on the residences, and if members with dependents would like to opt for a house that has less bedrooms but is larger or better suited for a larger family, it should be allowed. This would follow a principal, of larger houses for larger families.

The priority waitlist system is vulnerable to not supporting changes to member's families. If a member already resides in location, but their family has grown from marriage, blended families, caring for elderly parents, or the arrival of a baby, they are able to apply for an RHU with a new entitlement for a larger residence. The issue is that they are now priority 2 and will be unlikely to be offered an RHU. This does not support our members as their lives change and their families grow. What this creates is the perception that the military does not support growing families, leading to eventual release from the forces.

There is a shortage of RHUs designed for large families. CFB Petawawa is the location with the most RHUs in the country and will be used as an example. It has 1640 RHUs.³² 30% of the RHUs are two-bedroom residences available to single members or families of two. 64% are three-bedroom residences available to families of three. 22% are 4-bedroom residences available to families of four. There is one larger residence with seven bedrooms, which would be available to families up to seven. Families of five (for example, two parents and three children), do not have the option of larger residences, and will end up being offered an insufficiently sized residence. The portfolio of military housing does not align to the changing demographics of military members, and the housing allocation process does not take into the consideration changing demographics and family needs.

Limitations to CFHA

When assessing why CFHA's RHU allocation processes are not more supportive to military members, it seems there are three major factors. These factors are capacity, limited housing portfolio, and the desire for flexibility. The capacity CFHA is lacking comes from insufficient personnel, time, and financing. The limited housing portfolio is a supply of residences that does not meet the current demand, nor is there adequate percentages of residence sizes for the changing demographic of soldiers and their families. The requirement for flexibility, is the root of a non-standardized management of waitlists, because with transparency comes accountability and expectations. When there is little transparency, it gives housing managers the flexibility for syncing residence operations and maintenance with availability to whomever is in line, and not who is expecting it.

³² Canadian Forces Housing Agency. Military Housing Website. Services and Benefits for the Military. Last Updated 1 May 2023.

Not only does CFHA have just under 300 people, but the staff at each location is also limited.³³ There are insufficient personnel currently employed at the individual bases and wings to provide additional services then what are being provided now. If CFHA was to implement a more comprehensive information system to detail each residence with floor plans, dimensions, and pictures, then the implementation effort would need to be conducted by additional personnel. Depending on the base or wing, utilities maintenance is either coordinated by the municipality or real property operations (RP Ops). The maintenance of the RHU's, such as painting, renovations, maintenance, is conducted by contractors. Since the pandemic, securing contractors has been difficult, due to the pull by the local economy. The availability of building material has been more difficult because of the global markets, and competition for international shipping. These frictions, that are outside of CFHA's control, and make it more difficult for housing managers to give client's detailed information with any certainty about availability dates, and waitlist times.

Allocation Process Amendments

The following is five recommended amendments to the allocation processes. By outlining them, it will make it clear disparity between the low implementation cost versus the subsequent high reward of customer service and satisfaction. The first is a requirement for a repository of information on each of the residences. Similarly, to how the UK Defence Infrastructure Organization manages its defence housing, each residence has pictures, a floor plan, and dimensions, allowing clients to review the residence and assess its suitability. The information would both be available on the offer, as well as accessible to those on the waitlist. Secondly, as opposed to a take-it-or-leave it approach, by giving residence options, and allowing clients to put in preference their offers, it allows families to have a say in what is suitable for their situation. This more equitable process allows families to choose a larger house with less bedrooms, then a small house with four bedrooms, based on their families' specific needs. Thirdly a standardized, transparent, and nationally controlled waiting list, that is accessible to all who have an active application submitted, would provide members with realistic expectations of their likelihood of securing an RHU. The other names would be anonymous, for privacy reasons. This waiting list could be matched with a list of eligible residences at the respective base, which ones are coming up for vacancy, and when they are expected to be available. This would be the most difficult aspect of the process to implement, because it would create accountability and expectations. Departure processes for current tenants would need to be amended, to inform CFHA of departure on reception of posting message, and then confirmed on application for a move, in order to ensure the upcoming vacancy is mapped on a timeline. Fourthly, members on their HHTs, should be able to schedule an appointment to view a residence that has been offered to them. This would have to be amended in the occupant handbook, to ensure the privacy and rights of current tenants are respected. Finally, in order to manage these initiatives surveys would be advisable to capture the experiences of those members who have applied and are not

³³ Canadian Forces Housing Agency. Annual Report 2021-2022. National Defence. 2022.

living in RHUs, because “there is a lack of research and data available on CAF members who had never lived in military housing, including their reasons why and whether they experienced, or have perceptions of, issues or barriers in obtaining military housing”.³⁴ These initiatives would have an implementation cost of initial resources to establish, and a continued service cost to better support clients. The result of these implementations would provide adequate information for members and their families to make deliberate financial and familial decisions. It would remove the unknown shell game, of gambling, with the local markets. Thus, members will be able to focus efforts on establishing their families in new communities, transitioning to their new position, and remaining an operationally efficient member of the team.

Conclusion

“Peace of mind at home contributes to CAF families’ resiliency. Many military families choose to live in defence residential housing because it provides them with certainty that their families are safe and secure when the serving member is away from home.”³⁵ In conclusion, this paper looked to answer if the current CFHA allocation processes of Residential Housing Units (RHUs) are optimized to provide support to military member and their families during relocation. It was made evident, that the lack of a transparent, equitable, and informed process, causes CFHA’s RHU allocation policies to further exasperate the stressful impacts of relocation on military members and their families. The constraints and limitations of CFHA were analyzed, showing the difficulties and frictions in navigating shortages of contractors and building materials, which drives the requirement for flexibility in housing allocation. The paper made five recommendations, that if implemented would provide member’s and their families the information and predictability to make informed financial and familial decisions. It is recommended a full implementation analysis is conducted on these initiatives. The stability and transparency would reduce the stress around relocations that is being suffered at this time by members who routinely relocate. If the CAF wants to remain operationally relevant in this renewed great power competition, it needs to take care of its members and their families. Until adequate DND housing can be constructed to ensure supply meets demand, the allocation processes need to be rectified to support CAF members.

³⁴ Canada. Minister of National Defence. Assistant Deputy Minister Review Services. Evaluation of Military Housing. August 2021 – 1258-3-046-ADM (RS).

³⁵ Canadian Forces Housing Agency. Annual Report 2021-2022. National Defence. 2022.

Appendix 1 – Example RHU Offer

Good day [REDACTED]

1. You will find in attach, an offer for the residential housing unit (RHU) 100 Cannon for the July 17, 2020. The written confirmation of acceptance of this offer is required within 3 working days. Failure to accept this offer in this delay might be consider as a denied an may result in the unavailability of the RHU. IMPORTANT: As explained in the para B on the offer, RHU charges start at the availability date written in case #4 on the offer, furniture arrived or not.

* You can return the offer document by fax or Email

* Cancellation charges will be applied is you cancel this offer once accepted

2. **It is mandatory that I have a proof of your liability insurance coverage before you take possession of the RHU.** CFHA shall not be responsible for loss or damage of personal property that should have been covered by the occupant's own personal insurance, for example, vandalism, sewer back-up and fire damage. Insurance must start at the date mentioned in para 1.

* You will find some information required for the insurance in block 21 on the offer.

3. **Very important that you don't open new account with Hydro Québec and Gaz Métro.** CFHA own already accounts at this address and the responsibility of our accounts will be transfers to you. We will manage the transfers with the providers. If you have to call them to close your actual account, make sure that you don't open a new one.

4. **ANIMALS:** animals are allowed excepted into our apartment on Dubé Street. There is a restriction of two dogs per household. According to the municipal regulation, Bull Terriers, Staffordshire bull Terriers, American Bull terriers or American Staffordshire terriers or any dog from these races commonly known as "Pit bulls" are prohibited in Courcellette. Contact us for more information.

5. Others services: An authorization from CFHA is required before you get appointment for installing a TV Dish (418-844-6855). No authorization is required for cable.

6. We ask to read the Occupant handbook and the License to Occupy before our meet for the responsibility transfer of the RHU. These documents are attached to this email, I will answer your questions on **July 17**, if you have any. These documents must be read before you can sign your keys.

7. Don't hesitate to contact me for more information concerning this Email.

Thank!

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