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Defence Service Canada: A Proposed Institutional Name Change

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CHANGE**

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DEFENCE SERVICE CANADA: A PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL NAME CHANGE

AIM

1. The purpose of this paper is to explain why the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) should be renamed. The intent behind such wording change is to signal that a narrative shift is underway and to better position the CAF for the future operating pan-domain operating environment, where “we can no longer base our thinking and planning on a simplistic binary conception of war and peace”¹. In line with ongoing culture change, an incremental rebrand should be pursued to better align with overall Canadian societal values and to specifically represent the institution’s contemporary role to both the Government of Canada (GoC) and more broadly the Canadian public.

INTRODUCTION

2. The CAF is at an inflection point, whereby recruiting is insufficient to satisfy future force needs. Culture change is a contemporary focus, highlighted by the scathing Deschamps and Arbour reports. Both reviews highlight various shortcomings, representing archaic institutional behaviours which are fundamentally inconsistent with broader Canadian societal values², ultimately serving as an obstacle to attracting new recruits to enroll for service in the CAF. “The culture change that the CAF has embarked on cannot afford to fail. Above all, the CAF owes it to its own people, past, present and future, to live up to the values it claims to embrace and uphold at home and globally: Duty, Loyalty, Integrity, Courage.”³ Further, the Chief of Defence Staff has released an internal reconstitution directive stating the requirement to “modernize our personnel generation process. The enduring aim is promoting and defending Canadian sovereignty, security and interests, and commitment to delivering excellence in operations at home and abroad”⁴.

3. Personnel are a core CAF strength, with an emphasis on growth as a current priority: “The Regular Force will grow ...to 71,500 military personnel. This growth will enable critical investments in important areas such as space and cyber, intelligence and targeting, and, most importantly, support to the health and welfare of military personnel”⁵. Notably absent from the listed specialties are any combat arms or traditional ‘warfighting’ roles. The focus is consistent with the contemporary value proposition of the CAF: defending Canada increasingly relies upon non-kinetic (non-lethal) means, with specialists whose ‘weapons’ are more likely to be keyboards than carbines. This paper will dissect the current CAF name, highlighting its

¹ Canadian Armed Forces, “Draft Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept: Prevailing in a Dangerous World.” p.4

² Deschamps, “External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces”; Arbour, Louise, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.”

³ Arbour, Louise, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.” p. 1

⁴ Government of Canada, “CDS/DM Directive For CAF Reconstitution.”

⁵ Canada. Dept. of National Defence and Canada. Ministère de la défense nationale, “Strong, secure, engaged: Canada’s defence policy.” p. 13

relevance to modern Canadian values. Using past examples (internal and corporate) of successful re-naming initiatives, a proposed re-name will be offered, which will set conditions for further re-branding (imagery, narrative, strategy etc).

DISCUSSION

4. Following “The Canadian Forces Reorganization Act” of 01 Feb 1968 (commonly referred to as “unification” of the distinctive elements (Army/Navy/Air) into a singular service) the Canadian Forces (CF) was the common parlance used. For the decades that followed, the CF was predominantly involved in Peacekeeping and Cold War deterrence deployments overseas. The addition of the word “Armed” into everyday lexicon came following the Afghanistan era which saw significant Canadian warfighting, including the loss of 158 Canadian servicemembers’ lives and over 40,000 CAF members serving abroad⁶. The distinction is a crucial one to expand upon – the vernacular shift came at a time when the public perception of the military was higher than today, when it was one of a force waging war against Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. The era dubbed as the Global War On Terror emerged following 9/11 – the visceral nature of terrorist attacks against unarmed civilians served as justification for sending Canadian soldiers into harm’s way.

5. As time passed, troops returned home from Afghanistan and ultimately the public perception of the CAF began to fade into irrelevance as ramp ceremonies and hearsay journeys down the ‘highway of heroes’⁷ thankfully became a distant memory to most. The seismic shift which prompted the inclusion of the word “armed” into the CAF name had settled into obsolescence; the ‘warrior spirit’ which defined a decade of service in the public’s eye lost its meaning as CAF members were no longer publicly perceived as being engaged in combat operations at scale. With the exception of limited contributions to counter Daesh (OP IMPACT) there has been a notable absence of CAF involvement in bloodshed since withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014⁸.

6. A recent study (commissioned on behalf of DND) demonstrated qualitatively that “awareness of and familiarity with the CAF continues to be very low, particularly among those 18-34”⁹. The predominant awareness of CAF operations has shifted to be in domestic disaster-response roles, with limited understanding of what operations the CAF conducts abroad (generally assumed to be Peacekeeping). Fewer than half of survey respondents claimed to be very or somewhat familiar with the CAF. Overall this theme is concerning – CAF branding remains ambiguous to the population base it is beholden to defend. While this does not directly pertain to the organization’s name itself, it speaks to a broad opportunity for the institution to better position itself in the mind of Canadian citizens. A more appropriate title is an essential component in this endeavor; having a name which is truly reflective of the CAF’s *actual* roles

⁶ Canadian War Museum, “Canada and the War in Afghanistan.”

⁷ Government of Canada, “Highway of Heroes Tree Tribute Memorial.”

⁸ Government of Canada.

⁹ Earnscliffe Strategy Group, “Earnscliffe DND Views of CAF.Pdf.” p.2

will assist in awareness and positive perception towards the institution on behalf of the Canadian public.

7. A key consequence linked to an obfuscated understanding of the CAF is that it dissuades potential recruits from joining the force. “Some of those in the younger (aged 18-34) cohort indicated that they had considered joining when they were younger, while others said that they never had because they felt it was too scary”¹⁰. This relates directly to misconceptions regarding the expectations placed upon CAF personnel. While positive attributes such as bravery, courage, dedication are used to describe perceptions of service members, a separate poll found that “many educators are uncomfortable with the idea of getting up and saying we need a military where individuals are trained to — if necessary — kill others”¹¹. What follows is a conceptual disconnect: the means the military must be capable of using (violence) are negatively viewed, whereas the ends it is charged with upholding (peace) are held in positive regard.

8. This overall notion is problematic for the CAF’s cultural identity, both internal & external to the force. Understanding that peace and security are conceptually valued by the Canadian public, but the thought of violence is not, is a crucial contradiction. A recent example can be extracted from the “Freedom 2022 Convoy” protest in the Nation’s capital¹². The unlawful occupation of a major urban center was ultimately resolved via legal means, absent from any appreciable use of force (police, military or otherwise.) This exemplifies the overall aversion to violence: even when the nation’s capital was partially under siege by an organized group *claiming their intention to overthrow the sitting Federal Government*, legislation was used to achieve peaceful resolution. This exemplifies that Canada is a pacifist nation where non-violent solutions are possible to resolve differences. This peaceful persona is fundamentally inconsistent with the CAF moniker; a simple analysis of the current name is required to propose an amendment.

“Canadian Armed Forces” - Breakdown

9. Canadian Armed Forces, while direct and straightforward, contains three separate words. “Canadian” is self-evident; it is perfectly understandable that a national military branch could include the name of the nation it serves. “Armed” is particularly controversial as it implies the use of armed force, carriage of weapons and the implicit means to inflict suffering and end human life. In today’s age of a globally-connected information domain, there are countless examples of what effects ‘armed’ individuals and organizations can produce; more than any time in history, civilians removed from the horrors of war are nonetheless exposed to its effects. Similarly, “Forces” associates the use of force, lethal or otherwise, to impose one’s will upon others. The negative connotation associated with ‘armed forces’ directly opposes popular Canadian values.

¹⁰ Earnscliffe Strategy Group. p. 3

¹¹ Murray Brewster, “Military Is off the Radar of Most Canadians: DND Poll.”

¹² Public Safety Canada, “Parliamentary Committee Notes: Evolution of the Freedom 2022 Convoy.”

10. The CAF name and overall identity has become mis-aligned with modern-day Canadian public's values. The CAF represents a forceful, militaristic, federal-government institution which projects power via hierarchical means. While the latest Canadian Defence policy Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE) indicates "the overarching vision for the policy articulates the Canadian values that will guide the Canadian Armed Forces' engagement in the world: inclusion, compassion, accountable governance, and respect for diversity and human rights"¹³ these values are mostly absent from the CAF ethos (which lists loyalty, integrity, courage, excellence, inclusion and accountability as military values¹⁴). This disconnect widens upon further analysis of SSE, which states that "members of the Canadian profession of arms share a set of core values and beliefs found in the military ethos that guides them in the performance of their duty and allows a *special relationship of trust* [emphasis added] to be maintained with Canadian society"¹⁵. Given the divergence amongst stated values between the CAF ethos and Canadian society, coupled with the aforementioned overall public misunderstanding of the CAF, it is illogical for said trust to be credibly maintained.

11. Due to Canada's widespread population having little interaction with CAF members on a routine basis, it is unlikely that most civilian opinions are formed based on firsthand knowledge. Apart from popular media content, there are limited opportunities for public outreach (particularly in consequence of COVID-19) between CAF members and the general public. CAF-created content¹⁶ will build trust and shape the narrative as it sees fit, which has recently been notably distant from scenery resembling 'armed forces'¹⁷. This is reflective of the fact that the majority of uniformed CAF personnel are *not* routinely 'armed' and generally do not apply 'force' (violence, lethal) in the conduct of their duties. The CAF name is currently a misnomer for the majority of those serving in uniform; while it possesses a state-sanctioned monopoly on the lawful application of violence, it is realistically the exception, vice the norm, for CAF day-to-day duties. This disconnect may be an inadvertent deterrent to its recruit base, in terms of showcasing what life in the CAF truly consists of, particularly towards Gen Z.

12. Gen Z (people born between 1995 and 2010) are said to value self-expression, rejection of authority, environmental protection and believe in dialogue as a means to solve conflicts¹⁸. Dubbed "the True Gen", Gen Z will represent a critical CAF recruit pool for years to come. The risk created by having an organizational name which is disingenuous (for this generation in particular) is that it will drive individuals 'seeking truth' away from both a positive perception and any hope of recruitment. SSE espouses core Canadian values (inclusion, compassion, accountable governance, and respect for diversity and human rights) with added emphasis on

¹³ Canada. Dept. of National Defence and Canada. Ministère de la défense nationale, "Strong, secure, engaged: Canada's defence policy." p.105

¹⁴ "Canadian Armed Forces Ethos - Trusted to Serve." p.1

¹⁵ Canada. Dept. of National Defence and Canada. Ministère de la défense nationale, "Strong, secure, engaged: Canada's defence policy." p.19

¹⁶ *This Is For You*.

¹⁷ *Commercial for the Norwegian Armed Forces - What Do We Want to Happen?; Fight with the Canadian Forces*.

¹⁸ MICHELE CUNNINGHAM, VICTORIA SICILIA, "Exploring Gen Z How They Differ From Millennials"; Tracy Francis and Fernanda Hoefel, "'True Gen': Generation Z and Its Implications for Companies." p.2.

gender equality¹⁹; while these values are truly Canadian (not uniquely esteemed by Gen Z), they are notably absent from representation within the CAF's name. Thankfully the term itself is not immune to change; various examples exist to showcase successful re-naming efforts, both inside and outside the CAF.

Successful Examples of Formal Name Changes

What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell just as sweet.

-William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

13. In addition to the naming shift from CF to CAF, there have been internal re-names in recent memory. The trade currently labelled as Naval Warfare Officer (NWO) was previously Maritime Surface and Sub-surface Officers (MARS)²⁰; similarly, Air Navigators were renamed Air Combat Systems Officers (ACSO)²¹. There were various other military occupational specialty realignments, with “the name change being a reflection of what functions are being done in the workforce”²²; the titles were renamed to reflect an evolving role being served by the members occupying certain positions. Ensuring a name is aligned with a job description is essential in validating the purposes of the individuals who serve within its ranks. (Fittingly, the Canadian Forces College was formerly the Royal Canadian Air Force War Staff College). The detailed amplification behind various name changes is less important than the overall precedent these changes set: the institution is cognisant of the fact that the words being used to describe various entities must retain relevance and pertain to the contemporary roles fulfilled by such functions.

14. A successful example of a multinational (civilian) corporation recently changing names is Meta (formerly Facebook, particularly relevant to younger generations). Engaging product users, investors and the international community, CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced the change publicly whilst simultaneously releasing a ‘Founder’s letter’ stating:

What is Meta?

Meta builds technologies that help people connect, find communities, and grow businesses. When Facebook launched in 2004, it changed the way people connect. Apps like Messenger, Instagram and WhatsApp further empowered billions around the world. Now, Meta is moving beyond 2D screens toward immersive experiences like augmented and virtual reality to help build the next evolution in social technology²³.

¹⁹ Canada. Dept. of National Defence and Canada. Ministère de la défense nationale, “Strong, secure, engaged: Canada’s defence policy.” p.61

²⁰ LCdr Scott Nelson, “FORCE GENERATING RESERVE MARS OFFICERS: KEEPING THE ‘ONE NAVY’ READY AYE READY.” p.2

²¹ Government of Canada, “Air Combat Systems Officer.”

²² RCLS Secretariat, “The Logistician.” p.26

²³ Meta, “Introducing Meta: A Social Technology Company.”

15. Dissecting the approach itself is beyond the scope of this paper, however the change in name is explained in simple terms as an evolutionary arc of the original product suite and associated brand which billions of people use daily²⁴. Reference is made to the company's past, while recognizing a progressive shift towards the future of where the company needs to compete. This is precisely what the CAF should embrace, when framing any name change – leveraging its rich history and past successes to build upon, towards a more inclusive future. While this name change is drastic, it highlights the ability of an organization at scale (similar in headcount to the CAF)²⁵ being able to react to market conditions and pivot its focus while retaining its core revenue streams and maintaining user experience. Accepting that a wholesale name change is possible without fundamentally atrophying an organization's output, the obvious question remaining is: what is a suitable replacement for "CAF"?

16. Any possible name to replace the CAF must encapsulate a message which resonates predominantly with the Canadian public, without alienating or disenfranchising those serving in uniform. Ideally the name should be short, condensed easily into a catchy acronym and sufficiently unique so as to avoid confusion with extant organizations. Key terms which should be included must align with Canadian values and ideally reflect the CAF ethos concurrently. One such example is: "Defence Service Canada – Service de la Défense Canadien". The proposed name is distinctly absent from terms implying violence, lethality or weapons. "Defence" implies protection of Canada, resisting adversarial attacks. "Service" links to the honourable history of those who wear the uniform, proudly embodying the profession of arms and representative of the Canadian ethical principles. While few CAF members are perennially 'armed forces', every soldier, sailor and aviator has dedicated themselves to service in the defence of Canada.

CONCLUSION

17. It is critical that CAF leadership understand that to the younger generations 'words mean things'; it must align its name (and ultimately its overall brand) with values of the society it espouses to represent in order to resonate with, and appeal to recruitment of future generations (Gen Z and onwards.) A name change is a relatively inexpensive method of signalling to both serving members as well as the Canadian public (of all ages) that the CAF is an adaptive organization which is culturally evolving with the nature of its role in an increasingly complex national defence environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) The CAF name be evolved to Defence Service Canadian (DSC). An accompanying review of the National Defence Act is required to ensure any legal ramifications of a formal name change are fully addressed.

²⁴ Meta, "Meta-Reports-Fourth-Quarter-and-Full-Year-2022-Results-2023.Pdf."p. 1

²⁵ Meta. p. 2

- b) Chief Professional Conduct and Culture be tasked to focus additional efforts towards an overall, more comprehensive re-branding, to include aspects such as graphics, logos, uniforms (building upon the commendable efforts of the recent dress regulation amendment)²⁶.
- c) ADM(PA) be the lead L1 for communications and is responsible for developing and coordinating the supporting DND/CAF communications strategy.

²⁶ Government of Canada, “Changes to the Canadian Forces Dress Instructions.”

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