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CAF-Enabled Provision of Essential Services in the Arctic

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CAF-ENABLED PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN THE ARCTIC

AIM

1. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how and why the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) should leverage its wealth of knowledge and greater resources, to collaborate with Northern communities to provide essential services. In turn, this increased collaboration will support broader Government of Canada (GoC) initiatives of enhancing its presence within these communities, while also asserting Canada's sovereignty within the Arctic.

INTRODUCTION

2. Essential services are defined as basic and critical services, necessary to maintain a suitable standard of health, safety, and general well-being within a community.¹ These services generally include reliable access to food, clean water, environmentally-suitable shelter, medical care, [culturally-specific] education, modern communications, and year-round transportation. When considering Canada's unique Northern communities, essential services may also include emergency response for extreme weather events and culturally relevant resources for community education.^{2,3} As climate change transforms Canada's Arctic, and in recognition of the cultural uniqueness of the region, there is an emerging need for a more whole-of-government approach to increase essential services in remote communities.

3. Through numerous policies, the GoC has pledged to support better health, safety, and well-being of the Northern communities.⁴ To date, however, the GoC's ability to succeed in this pledge has been limited as a result of its limited capacities. *Leveraging its skillsets and greater resources, the CAF should collaborate more with Arctic communities, regarding the provision of essential services, and act as a key enabler in further advancing the GoC's intentions within the region.* This paper will focus on answering why and how the CAF can collaborate with Northern communities to achieve this.

DISCUSSION

CAF Current Presence in the Arctic

4. There are currently five CAF operations in the Arctic that focus on a range of activities, including surveillance, search and rescue, ice-breaking, and sovereignty patrols.⁵ Additionally, the CAF maintains several military installations, with key facilities at Canadian Forces Station (CFS) Alert; CFS Eureka; CAF Arctic Training Centre Resolute Bay; and the Nanisivik Naval

¹ Canada. Public Safety Canada. *Guidance on Essential Services and Functions in Canada During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Accessed 26 February 2023.

² Canada. *Highlights of Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*. Accessed 26 February 2023.

³ Canada. Crown-Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. Winnipeg, 2015: 2-3, 7.

⁴ Canada. Crown-Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*. Ottawa, 2019: 27-29.

⁵ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Current Operations & Joint Military Exercise List*. Ottawa (2022): Accessed 26 February 2023.

Facility on Baffin Island.⁶ These facilities are used for research, training, communications, and logistical support for operations in the region. Complementing the physical facilities and playing an essential role to operations is the Canadian Rangers, composed of Indigenous People who bring local knowledge and expertise to the CAF presence in the region.⁷ As the Arctic becomes increasingly important due to climate change and geopolitical tensions, the CAF's presence in the region is likely to continue to grow.

5. The CAF brings decades of experience gained through expeditionary operations, for which it has acquired a range of skills and expertise that should be leveraged to support the delivery of essential services within Northern communities. To begin with, CAF personnel have advanced skillsets in transportation, logistics, engineering, healthcare, and infrastructure development; which can be particularly valuable in remote/isolated communities, where access to comparable services may be limited and seasonally accessible. The CAF is familiar with operating in remote and challenging environments, which can be transferred to supporting the delivery of essential services to northern communities. Building on this, the CAF also has experience in emergency response and disaster relief, including access to clean water, which can be leveraged to various emergencies in remote communities. For example, the CAF can provide support for medical crises and evacuations, transport of essential supplies and equipment, and infrastructure development in isolated Northern communities. By leveraging the CAF to coordinate and work with local authorities, the GoC can develop and implement various essential services. Holistically, this supports the CAF mandate to play a more active and vital role in the Arctic, by supporting the emerging needs for essential services within Northern communities.⁸ In leveraging its expertise and resources, it can help improve the well-being of residents and build resilience to the challenges faced in the Arctic.

Potential Areas for Collaboration

6. Given the already-established presence in the region, there are several potential opportunities for the CAF to collaborate with Northern communities, to support emerging essential service requirements. First, the CAF could collaborate on infrastructure projects, such as construction of transportation infrastructure, healthcare facilities, and water treatment plants. The collaborative approach would incorporate community perspectives and needs, facilitated through the largest federal entity that could assist in promoting a whole-of-government approach to solution development. Projects such as a modernized airfield at Cambridge Bay have already been identified as a local community crisis.⁹ Leveraging CAF airfield construction/maintenance skillsets could support the sustainable delivery and maintenance of essential services, while sustaining valuable technical skillsets required with the CAF for future expeditionary operations. Additionally, this project would increase economic potential to the region, promoting regional capacity building opportunities, and supporting local businesses and employment.

⁶ Regehr, Ernie. *Circumpolar Military Facilities of the Arctic Five*. The Simons Foundation (2017): 6-8.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Defence Policy Review: Strong, Secure, Engaged*. Ottawa, 2017: 14-17, 50-51, 57-60.

⁹ Krymalowski, Sarah. *Jet Service to Nunavut Community to End as Canadian North Retires Last Jet That Can Land on Gravel*. CBC News: Accessed 23 January 2023.

7. A second area of collaboration could be in the provision of healthcare services. Northern communities often face challenges in accessing healthcare, due to their remote location. With its trained medical personnel, the CAF can provide support for medical emergencies, including transport of patients to medical facilities, and the establishment of ‘seasonal’ field hospitals in remote locations to triage more negligible issues.^{10,11}

8. Thirdly, collaboration could be in the provision of logistics support. Northern communities often face challenges in accessing essential supplies, such as food, fuel, and medical equipment. A third option for collaboration would be through leveraging CAF expertise in transportation to provide transport of, or oversee support for, the delivery of essential supplies to remote communities throughout the year, such as food and medical equipment.^{12,13}

9. Finally, collaboration could lead to continued capacity building and training; where the CAF works with local environmental and cultural experts for mutual benefits.^{14,15} The CAF could provide training on emergency preparedness, search and rescue, and other essential skills that can help communities to become more self-sufficient and resilient in the face of challenges. In return, the CAF can learn from regional experts on how to better support their needs, as well as how the CAF can better operate within the Arctic. This better positions the CAF to respond to emergencies and natural disasters in Canada and abroad.

10. Overall, CAF collaboration with Northern communities can help address emerging essential services requirements and support the well-being of residents in these remote regions. Concurrently, it can improve relationships with the Northern communities, which in turn leads to increased trust and understanding through shared experiences and working towards common goals. This ultimately enhances national security and sovereignty, through improved capacity and responsiveness in the Arctic.

Prior CAF Examples of Support to Remote Communities

11. The concept of leveraging the CAF for collaboration with remote communities, for the delivery of essential services, is neither a novel concept, nor is it exclusive to Canada’s Arctic. There are several examples in which Canada has performed similar functions abroad, in support of partner nations.

Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)

¹⁰ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Defence Policy Review: Strong, Secure, Engaged*. Ottawa (2017): 80.

¹¹ Wright, Trevor. *Arctic Infrastructure Lacking in Some Areas, Say Former Army Colonel*. Nunavut News, Nunavut (2021): Accessed 23 February 2023.

¹² Lajeunesse, Adam. *The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Purpose, Capabilities, and Requirements*. Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, Calgary AB (2015): 3-7.

¹³ Wright, Trevor. *Arctic Infrastructure Lacking in Some Areas, Say Former Army Colonel*. Nunavut News, Nunavut (2021): Accessed 23 February 2023.

¹⁴ Lajeunesse, Adam. *The Canadian Armed Forces in the Arctic: Purpose, Capabilities, and Requirements*. Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, Calgary AB (2015): 3-7.

¹⁵ Wright, Trevor. *Arctic Infrastructure Lacking in Some Areas, Say Former Army Colonel*. Nunavut News, Nunavut (2021): Accessed 23 February 2023.

12. First, PRTs were used throughout the military campaign in Afghanistan, to provide essential services to remote communities, such as improved infrastructure, education, healthcare, and governance. Working with local community representatives, the aim was to promote stability and development.^{16,17} The PRTs would collaborate with local leaders and organizations to identify and address community needs, while also gaining cultural and regional insights into the challenges of the communities. Through their efforts, the PRTs built trust and relationships with Afghans, ultimately contributing to regional stability and security.

Canadian Training Assistance Teams (CTAT) Jordan & Lebanon

13. Second, the CAF has fielded Canadian Training Assistance Teams (CTATs) to both Jordan and Lebanon, which deployed to provide essential services to remote communities in those countries. The CTATs collaborated with local leaders and regional service providers, to improve local capacities in areas such as healthcare, engineering, and civil-military cooperation, as well as providing training and mentorship to Jordanian and Lebanese military personnel.¹⁸ The CTATs also facilitated delivery of humanitarian aid as part of the GoC's response to the Syrian refugee crisis.¹⁹ Through these efforts, the CTATs built relationships with local communities, promoted stability, development and resilience within vulnerable communities, while concurrently contributing to regional stability and security.

New Zealand Defence Force Example of Support to Remote Communities

14. External to Canada exists additional examples of military support to the provision of essential services in remote communities. For instance, the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) works with island nations in the Pacific. NZDF personnel are continuously involved in a range of activities, such as building infrastructure, providing medical and dental care, supporting disaster relief efforts, and developing local governance and community development within those communities.²⁰ Working closely with local authorities and communities, they share expertise and resources to identify and address specific needs; as well as building relationships and enhancing regional security. The NZDF focus on contributing to the development and well-being of Pacific Islands communities, while strengthening regional partnerships and cooperation for the benefit of collective stability and security.

Lessons Learned & Comparison to the Canadian Context

15. In considering collaboration with Northern communities, the CAF can draw on both expeditionary experiences, as well as ally experiences (i.e. NZDF), to support initiatives to provide essential services to Canada's Arctic. While the contexts of delivering essential services

¹⁶ Holland, Kenneth. *The Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team: The Arm of Development in Kandahar Province*. American Review of Canadian Studies, Vol 40 (2010): 277-280.

¹⁷ Cleland, Paul. *Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (KPRT)*. Published 26 November 2008 (Accessed 23 February 2023).

¹⁸ NATO Association of Canada. *An Insight into the Canadian Training Assistance Team (CTAT-L) in Lebanon Through Captain Mike Wonnacott*. Published 15 July 2019 (Accessed 23 February 2023).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ New Zealand Defence Force. *NZDF Fine-Tunes Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Plans*. New Zealand Defence Force, 8 June 2017 (Accessed 23 February 2023).

to Afghanistan, Jordan and Lebanon were vastly different to the Arctic, these examples demonstrated an importance in working collaboratively with local representatives to identify and address community needs. Accordingly, the CAF can assert that it has a baseline knowledge and essential skillsets within the forces. However, this capability would continuously degrade if not actively used, until the experienced generation retires and the knowledge is lost for good.

16. Furthermore, given these skillsets demonstrated value in past military campaigns, it stands to reason that situations will manifest in the future that will require a similar approach; qualifying a need to retain these skillsets through alternative activities during the years between expeditionary campaigns. The CAF must take these common skillsets and apply a similar approach to working with Indigenous and Northern communities, to better understand their unique needs and priorities. At the same time, the CAF should leverage the unique challenges and opportunities found in the Arctic to evolve these skillsets for more universal application. This serves the immediate need for supporting the Northern communities, while also self-educating on how to more flexibly provide essential services to varying partner organizations; or short, the CAF can increase institutional flexibility.

17. Lastly, the CAF can collaborate with the NZDF to share lessons learned and consolidate their experiences for mutual benefits. Because of the vastly different regions, the possibilities exist that the NZDF has observed unique challenges of their own and developed different techniques that could be explored for use within Canada's Arctic communities. Likewise, the uniqueness of Canada's Arctic region might position Canada to inform global partners on issues and techniques they might not otherwise experience in their own regions. This would increase Canada's status as an Arctic expert and global partner in stability and security in remote regions outside of conventional conflict. Overall, by drawing on these experiences, the CAF can develop a comprehensive and collaborative approach to providing essential services to remote communities in Canada's Arctic.

Key Policies that Enable/Are Enabled by these Initiatives

18. Any collaboration, however, should be anchored in firm policies, to ensure viability and survivability. It is for that reason that there are numerous existing policies that either support collaboration, or they themselves are further supported by the CAF's prospective activities.

19. For the purposes of enabling the CAF to engage in collaboration, no policy is more important than the *Defence Policy Review: Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE)*, which outlines the government's vision of Canada's defence priorities and investments.²¹ This policy promotes the CAF's collaboration, as it enables the government's goal of enhancing the CAF's capabilities in responding to domestic emergencies and disasters; including those in remote and isolated communities. By providing essential services to remote communities, the CAF could enhance its own presence and ability to operate in the Arctic, by establishing relationships with Indigenous communities and improving the infrastructure and transportation systems needed to support military operations.

²¹ Canada. Department of National Defence. *Defence Policy Review: Strong, Secure, Engaged*. Ottawa, 2017: 14-17, 50-51, 57-60.

20. Concurrently, CAF collaboration in the provision of essential services supports several policies as well. First, Canada's *Arctic & Northern Policy Framework* aims to promote whole-of-government development and protection in the Arctic.²² CAF collaboration would support the policy's priorities, with the following highlighted infrastructure needs:

- a. Improved charting and mapping;
- b. Energy infrastructure;
- c. Better port facilities;
- d. Better airport facilities;
- e. Reliable rail networks; and
- f. Roads to access communities and mineral resources.

In doing so, the CAF would contribute to improving the health and well-being of Northern residents, by ensuring access to basic services such as healthcare, education, clean water, and emergency response capabilities.

21. Second, *The Northern Strategy* aims to promote Canada's sovereignty, economic and social development, and environmental protection in the North. The provision of essential services through CAF collaboration can support the social and economical development components of this strategy. More specifically, the CAF's extensive skillsets can be leveraged to promote exploration and development, addressing critical infrastructure needs, and supporting Northerners' well-being.²³

22. Third, the *Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action* includes recommendations related to healthcare and cultural recognition.²⁴ CAF collaboration in the provision of essential services in Northern communities would contribute to GoC's commitments toward satisfying multiple calls-to-action, particularly:

- a. Call-to-Action #18-24, regarding the provision of healthcare services to Indigenous communities; and
- b. Call-to-Action #57, regarding the provision education to public servants focused on skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism.

²² Canada. Crown-Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*. Ottawa, 2019: 27-29.

²³ Canada. Indian & Northern Affairs Canada. *Canada's Northern Strategy*. Ottawa, 2009: 14-19.

²⁴ Canada. Crown-Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada. *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. Winnipeg, 2015: 2-3, 7.

23. Finally, CAF collaboration in the provision of essential services could also be designed to consider the unique needs and experiences of women and girls in remote Northern communities.^{25,26} This could include ensuring access to healthcare and education services that are responsive to the specific needs of women and girls. Furthermore, the CAF's engagement with Indigenous communities could also support the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the North, by promoting the role of Indigenous women in leadership and decision-making. Overall, the initiative, supported by various existing policies, will contribute toward an end-state that supports Canada's advancement within the Arctic.

INITIAL WAY FORWARD

Cambridge Bay Airfield

24. As an initial way forward, the CAF should identify a single initiative to proceed with as a proof of concept. The CAF should leverage the community needs of Cambridge Bay, specifically their need for an improved airfield that can support larger aircraft year-round, as a starting point for providing essential services to remote communities in Canada's Arctic.²⁷

25. The improved airfield would serve as a hub for the delivery of essential goods and services to remote communities across the Arctic. The CAF could work with commercial and government partners to develop a comprehensive logistics network that supports the delivery of essential services to Northern communities, including food, medical supplies, and fuel. In turn, this would facilitate greater economic development and job opportunities in the region.

26. Overall, by leveraging the community needs of Cambridge Bay, the CAF can build stronger relationships and partnerships with northern communities and develop a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to providing essential services in the Arctic region.

CONCLUSION

27. As a result of climate change and ongoing global tensions, the necessity for essential services in the Arctic is unlikely to subside. If the GoC is to deliver on its commitments to supporting the security and prosperity of Northern communities, it will need a strong and experienced champion to take a more leading role in collaborating initiatives to deliver essential services.

28. With its decades of experience and well-refined skillsets, complimented by its current presence in the region, the CAF is well poised to partner with Northern communities and fulfil the role of the GoC's champion. As one of, if not, the most capable branch of the GoC, CAF contributions to such initiatives as the Cambridge Bay airfield would go an exceptionally long way to promoting security and stability in the Arctic. More importantly, it would further promote

²⁵ OECD. *Gender Equality in Canada: Mainstreaming, Governance and Budgeting*. Ottawa, 2018: 4.

²⁶ Canada. Department of Women & Gender Equality. *Women and Gender Equality Canada Mandate*. Ottawa, 2021: accessed 26 February 2023.

²⁷ Krymalowski, Sarah. *Jet Service to Nunavut Community to End as Canadian North Retires Last Jet That Can Land on Gravel*. CBC News: Accessed 23 January 2023.

a mutual relationship between the GoC and Northern communities; something essential for the prosperity of all Canadians.

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