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Major Brian Mullins

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**WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY DO NOT COME: OPTIONS FOR THE CAF'S
EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY AIM**

Major Brian Mullins

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WHAT HAPPENS IF THEY DO NOT COME: OPTIONS FOR THE CAF'S EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY AIM

1. The aim of this service paper is to provide an overview of the employment strategy of the Canadian Army (CA) and recommendations to the Commander of the Canadian Army (CCA) on methods to employ the CA to serve the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) given the current staffing levels.

INTRODUCTION

2. When reviewing the statistics released by the CAF about the ongoing retention issues¹, it requires the following question to be asked: what happens if CA members do not stay as anticipated nor new civilians join the service? It is an underlying aspect that seems to be dismissed as an assumption that the inflow and outflow of the CA will stabilize. Perhaps worse, it seems that the CA's perspective is that the organization can reverse this trend through marketing and improved flow² from enrolment to achieving an Operationally Functional Point (OFP) which is defined as when an officer or non-commissioned member "completes all qualifications required for their first employment in the military occupation".³ But what if the CA is incapable of attracting and retaining members? The CAF is a voluntary force and without the will of members to stay or join, the organization's usefulness erodes. This is the premise of this paper which will demonstrate that the current CA's purpose and employment concept must be redefined in alignment with its current capabilities and not on the hope of increased strength size.

3. A company that had a business plan that was predicated on the hope it could do more even though data shows their resources are continuously eroding would not be considered acceptable. The same applies for human resources in the CA. It is time the CA accepts its shortterm personnel reality and instead of targeting an arbitrary total employment number, it must reimagine what it means to be a CA member.

DISCUSSION

4. To understand the significance of an eroding force strength, it is crucial to recognize that the sensational nature of the 2022 reporting around retention and recruitment⁴ is rooted in an over decade long struggle to meet the necessary recruiting and retention to sustain the force. When reviewing a 2016 Auditor General's Report, it clearly showcases that the number of soldiers, sailors and aviators choosing the CAF was not sufficient for the recorded attrition⁵. While this focuses on a binary scale, in or out of the CAF, it is incomplete that it does not

¹ "Canadian Armed Forces Chief Orders Halt to Non-Essential Activities amid Personnel Crisis - National | Globalnews.Ca, para 8."

² National Defence, "Reconstitution, 33-34."

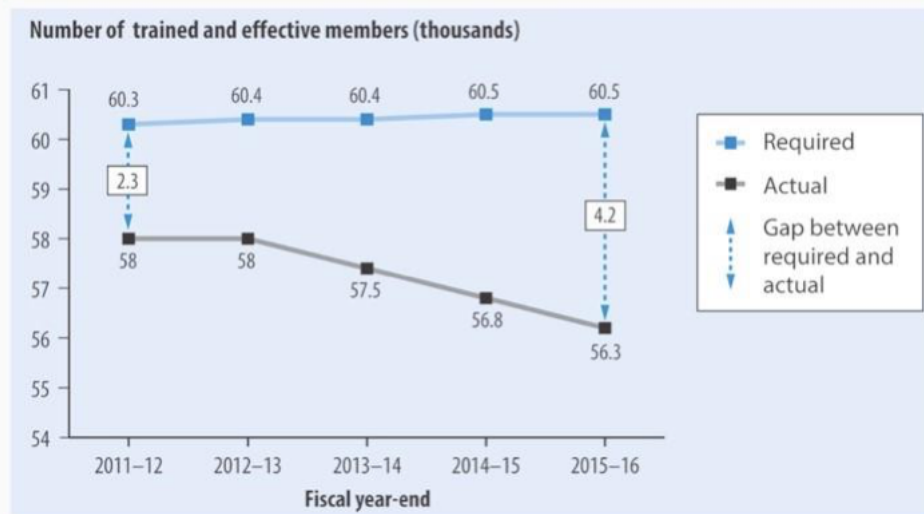
³ Defence, "DAOD 5031-8, Canadian Forces Professional Development, 6.1 - 7.1."

⁴ "Military Needs Help from Canadians amid Personnel Crisis: Defence Chief - National | Globalnews.Ca."

⁵ Government of Canada, "Report 5—Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention—National Defense," 8.

showcase the amount of personnel who joined and did not make it through the training system, which essentially produces a zero net gain/loss, nor the amount of people serving in the CAF that are occupying a position but not able to fully fulfil the requirements, or specifically, breach the universality of service. Perhaps with a view to achieve clarity on force strength, a 2023 Canadian Forces General Order outlines that personnel “who are permanently incapable of meeting one or more minimum operations standards (breach of universality of service) must be released in order to preserve operational capability”.⁶ This seems to be contradictory to the ongoing goal to recruit and retain more personnel. If new members do not come, then how does forcing members to retire who have a limited capacity, but still *some* capacity to help, improve the overall personnel crisis in the CA?

Exhibit 5.1—The gap between the required and actual numbers of trained and effective Regular Force members increased from about 2,300 at the end of the 2011–12 fiscal year to about 4,200 at the end of the 2015–16 fiscal year



Source: Based on data from National Defence (unaudited)—numbers have been rounded

5. To better fulfil the necessary requirements in the defence of Canada, the Department of National Defence (DND) has announced several new or improved capabilities in 2022. While the F-35 procurement for the Royal Canadian Air Force makes national headlines, the CA is fast tracking anti-tank and ground-based air defence purchases through an urgent operational requirements process.⁷ This amounts to a significant financial commitment as well as reconfirmed commitment to the defence of Canada and North America through North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and to our allies in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). But what is not indicated in the announcements are the toll it takes on the currently serving or potential future serving members. These capabilities require training, maintenance,

⁶ Department of National Defence, “CANFORGEN 021/23, para 2.”

⁷ “Canadian Army Fast-Tracking Purchase of Air Defence, Anti-Tank Missiles and Counter-Drone Gear.”

and dedicated personnel. These increases are on top of the already taxed training system and maintenance capabilities within the CA and the personnel who will have to pivot from current

tasks to make this happen. This is not the best way to reduce burnout nor entice Canadians to join the CA.

6. With respect to personnel, it requires an elaboration on their tempo. Tempo increases are manageable when there is a sufficient work force to share the burden. But when you have a workforce that is currently attempting to satisfy many different responsibilities and new, novel capabilities (and their associated responsibilities) increase this burden, it will inevitably require certain aspects to be prioritized. The CA is currently understaffed and if the attrition continues to outstrip the intake, the logical conclusion is that those in uniform are going to be asked to do more, until they reach a breaking point.

7. To highlight the contradictory messaging with regards to the CAF's retention and recruitment strategy, a review of Canada's largest expeditionary presence (largely CA members) in the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in Latvia is required. The EFP has seen an increase in Canadian commitments from an original contribution of approximately 450 in 2017⁸ to currently over 1400 in Latvia or in support of this operation⁹. This boosts NATO's capability; however, it is contrary to the public messaging about the retention crisis¹⁰ in the CAF as well as the data published in the Canadian Armed Forces Retention Strategy¹¹. This data shows that almost 6% of personnel left due to "operational tempo". Extrapolating this to the CA regular force (approximately 22,250¹² people) and a desired attrition rate of 8.5%¹³, it would mean that 1912 CA members would leave annually and of them approximately 163 would leave due to operational tempo. While current release rates are not publicly available, it is widely presumed that the rates are higher than the target meaning more CA members are leaving due to operational tempo than desired. More members could be leaving indirectly to operational tempo with their reason for leaving being lumped into the significantly larger and more generic "job dissatisfaction" category. Without an improved CAF intake, this trend seems unlikely to change.

⁸ Defence, "Operation REASSURANCE."

⁹ Defence, "Canada and Latvia Sign Joint Declaration to Augment NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence Latvia."

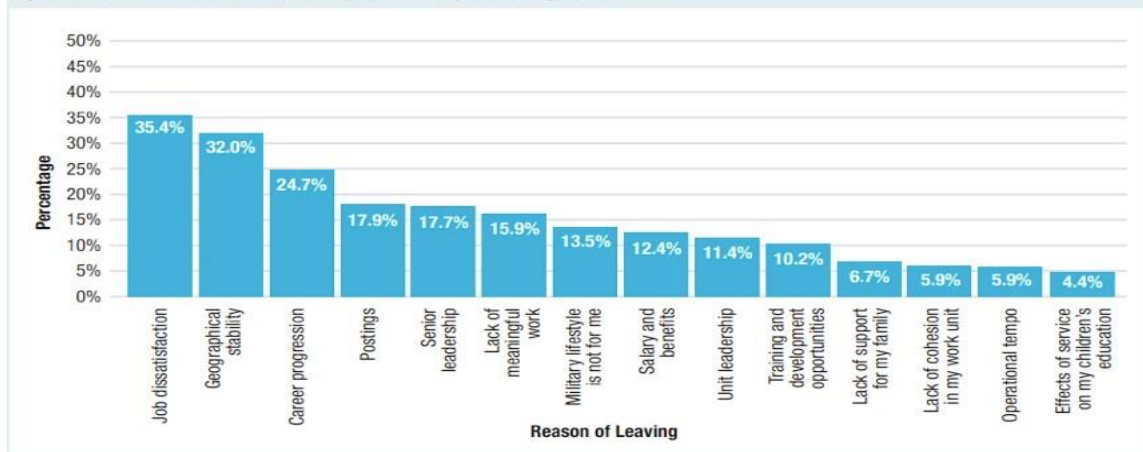
¹⁰ "Military Needs Help from Canadians amid Personnel Crisis: Defence Chief - National | Globalnews.ca."

¹¹ "Canadian Armed Forces Retention Strategy, 69."

¹² National Defence, "The Canadian Army of Today, 2."

¹³ "Canadian Armed Forces Retention Strategy, 3."

Figure 4: 2013-2017 CAF Exit Survey (voluntarily releasing members)



8. The current CA organizational structure is also contributing to the personnel challenges of the CA. The CA is currently situated on a structure that has seen growth and contractions cyclically based on political decision-making. This chart shows the overall CAF size

highlighting these highs during the Cold War in the 1980s, a strong contraction during the Force Reduction Plan in the mid-1990s which saw over 10,000 members leave the CAF early¹⁴, a significant uptake during combat operations in Afghanistan in the early 2000s and finally a relative stabilizing since then.¹⁵ Leveraging a consistent, multi-political party approach to the long-term future of the CA will accommodate a cemented sense of purpose for those who are currently serving and less ambiguity for potential new members regardless of intake amounts.



¹⁴ Government of Canada, “Unfair Demand to Repay Overpayments Made Under the Forces Reduction Program, 2.”

¹⁵ “Canada Military Size 1985-2023.”

9. This personnel trend does not line up with the CAF's desired expeditionary output which requires significant CA commitment. As noted in Canada's Defence Policy, the CAF aims to contribute the following to international peace and stability:
- a. "Two sustained deployments of ~500-1500 personnel, including one as a lead nation;
 - b. One time-limited deployment of ~500-1500 personnel (6-9 months duration);
 - c. Two sustained deployments of ~100-500 personnel;
 - d. Two time-limited deployments (6-9 months) of ~100-500 personnel;
 - e. One Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) deployment, with scalable additional support; and
 - f. One Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation, with scalable additional support."¹⁶
10. On top of the above outlined commitments, the CA has had large domestic operation involvements. This includes domestic operations caused by environmental factors, as well as a

novel domestic response to the COVID-19 pandemic which saw CAF members providing support to cutoff populations as well as provide care in long-term care homes under Operation LASER.¹⁷ The CA does not currently have a collective training exercise for domestic deployments but instead provides an ad-hoc commitment scalable to the request for assistance from the provincial government(s).

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Domestic Operations. If support to domestic operations is one of the most important roles for the CAF as deemed by the Canadian Government, then the organizing of the CAF should change. This should include changing the composition of the CA divisions to better reflect the requirements of each of the dedicated regions. For ease, these regions could be largely geographically defined into three separate regions: Quebec and East, Ontario and West, and North of the 60th parallel. Given the differing factors, such as size, remoteness, population density, environmental impacts etc., it necessitates having different capabilities within each. While the CA will be the basis of any domestic response, the north of the 60th parallel, for example, requires more aircraft which necessitates the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) to review its disposition throughout Canada. The RCAF is positioned well to do this with bases or wings in seven out of ten Canadian provinces already¹⁸, but an established footprint in one of the three Canadian Territories would help. The Ontario and West region have well defined roads which can be leveraged whilst the Quebec and East region is largely accessible by the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and roadways. This dedicated focus would also require the CAF,

¹⁶ "Canada-Defence-Policy-Report.Pdf, 17."

¹⁷ "Canadian Armed Forces Depart Ontario Long-Term Care Homes, 2."

¹⁸ Defence, "Canadian Armed Forces Bases and Support Units."

and specifically the CA, to partially forego aspects of its expeditionary desires. It is unreasonable to expect soldiers, sailors, and aircrew to perform at a first-class level abroad, if they are constantly employed doing tasks other than outlined in their OFP. Further elaboration on structural changes is contained in paragraph 15.

12. Reducing Commitments. To reduce operational tempo and increase soldiers employed in tasks they were trained for with more frequency, reducing commitments is necessary. This is not a cataclysmic issue as Canada is a contributor nation for expeditionary purposes. Focusing on key skill sets to fill niche areas as part of a coalition force will greatly benefit Canada's allies whilst allowing Canada to continue to exert influence throughout the world. Ideally, these less person demanding tasks are carried out at home as well which means those filling those roles are excused from domestic operations. Additionally, this allows these members to become the best in the world at what Canada contributes to a coalition. Two examples of what this could be are cyber and ground-based air defence (GBAD). Cyber could be both offensive and defensive to ensure the safety of Canadians. GBAD could be a significant force multiplier, from the CA, to deploy overseas but also secure air bases, government buildings as well as key events (notably the G8 summit held in Alberta in 2002 which had Canadian GBAD assets protecting it).¹⁹

13. Multi-Tool Approach. Even if the CAF attrition remains constant, it could be that the Canadian Government views the current CAF multi-tool approach as acceptable, which sees CA

members doing differing tasks outside of what they were trained for. But if that is the case, then the way the CA is organized should change. This is where the CA should focus its intentions on creating a structure that aligns more precisely to what the CA is going to be doing. Units flush with people and equipment with clearly defined specific goals and CA common goals is a sturdy foundation that the CAF can leverage to task-tailor for the unknown future requirements.

14. Lines of Effort. By pairing new upcoming capabilities with focused attention to what the CAs identified purposes are, there is an increased level of unity amongst the force but also a more realistic expectation of the CA's purpose in the eyes of the Canadian public. Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy²⁰, which outlines some military tasks in the area, is a great opportunity for the CA to focus to put this into practice. By aiming the CA on what appears to be the pacing threat for Canada, which is China, the CA can be restructured to be fit for this enduring purpose. Firstly, having a force that is focused on domestic responses. This includes defence of Canada and North America but also responding to the mentioned above domestic responses. The second line of task is for expeditionary commitments. This includes the ongoing EFP task but also potential peacekeeping tasks as well as Humanitarian Assistance Disaster Relief possibilities.

¹⁹ "Canadian Military Eyes New Ground-Based Air Defence System at a Cost of \$1 Billion, para 1."

²⁰ "Indo-Pacific-Indo-Pacifique-En.Pdf, 14-16."

15. Reduced Understaffed Units. While simply reducing the number of the authorized establishment in the CAF, 71500²¹, down to 60,000 as an example, might increase the percentage of filled positions, it does nothing to improve the effectiveness of the CAF. It does not help currently serving CA members reduce their tempo, nor improve the satisfaction of employment for new members. Therefore, it would seem more prudent to leave the establishment number the same but reduce some units or structures to nil strength. This allows the key capabilities to be staffed completely whilst also saving the institutional structure for scalability. It does not seem prudent to have four CA divisions across Canada partially staffed when three completely staffed Canadian Mechanized Brigade Groups (CMBG) could satisfy the CA's more realistic expeditionary target of up to one CMBG deployed at a time²². If the CA does not grow, then this reduces the workload of those currently serving. If it does grow, then nil strength units can be activated to accommodate the influx.

CONCLUSION

16. The CCA must consider their focus for the CA service to Canada. This should change from the jack of all trades concept to focusing human resources in clearly defined unified purposes. It has become clear that the CAF is not attracting new members and retaining current members to a level that sees the CAF, specifically the CA strength grow. It seems presumptuous to assume that the CA's actions can change that in a positive way. Certainly, it can detract but not create this sense of duty to encourage others to join. So, with that in mind, the CA should view attraction and retention as secondary effects in a more holistic approach. It is vital that the CA makes changes to demonstrate it has a clear sense of purpose to improve CA members satisfaction and clarify what prospective members are joining.

²¹ "Canada-Defence-Policy-Report.Pdf, 33."

²² "Canada-Defence-Policy-Report.Pdf, 36"