



## Testing the Wings of Change: The RCAF and the Reconstitution Directive

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### JCSP 50

#### Exercise Solo Flight

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE - COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 50 - PCEMI n° 50  
2023 - 2024

Exercise Solo Flight – Exercice Solo Flight

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**Lieutenant-Colonel Angeline M. Marasse**

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## **TESTING THE WINGS OF CHANGE: THE RCAF AND THE RECONSTITUTION DIRECTIVE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2022 Canadian news media reported that the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) were 16,000 people short of their total establishment number of 100,000.<sup>1,2</sup> In an increasingly more dynamic and complex global security environment, the Canadian military is looking to pivot in response, however, with this extreme personnel shortage, they are struggling to stay afloat. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, recruitment levels continue to decline, unable to keep up with natural attrition rates. The CAF is in crisis. On 6 October 2022, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) and the Deputy Minister (DM) of National Defence issued their directive on CAF reconstitution in a concerted effort to get the forces back in the black.<sup>3</sup> The single document provides direction across the Defence Team, and focuses on two themes, recover and build, with priorities consisting of recruiting, retention, modernization, and rationalization. It looks good on paper, the question, however, is whether this directive will provide enough impetus to transform the institution?

In the 1960s, Minister of National Defence Paul Hellyer initiated the unification of Canada's militaries, bringing the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), the Canadian Army (CA) and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), under a single service, creating the CAF that exists today. However, despite this unification, over the decades each service has maintained its own identity fostering a common culture maintaining their status as institutions in their own rights. This paper seeks to understand if the CDS/DM directive on reconstitution will have the required positive effects on the RCAF considering its unique identity within the CAF.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the institutionalization of the reconstitution directive using Scott's institutional framework model to assess whether the directive will succeed in transforming the RCAF. This will be evaluated by narrowing in the discussion on the specific case of the RCAF Snowbirds squadron as it is a culturally significant, highly public unit of strategic importance to the CAF. It will be demonstrated that the reconstitution directive will be met with limited implementation success within the RCAF as it does not consider all aspects of an institution as described by Scott's framework.

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<sup>1</sup> Murray Brewster and Richard Raycraft, "Military Personnel Shortage Will Get Worse before It Gets Better, Top Soldier Says," *CBC News*, October 6, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/eyre-shortage-directive-1.6608107>.

<sup>2</sup> Dylan Dyson, "Canadian Armed Forces Facing Member Shortage 'Crisis,'" Ottawa, April 5, 2023, <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/canadian-armed-forces-facing-member-shortage-crisis-1.6344761>.

<sup>3</sup> Department of National Defence Canada, "CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution," August 11, 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/dm-cds-directives/cds-dm-directive-caf-reconstitution.html>.

## ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

W. Richard Scott introduced an analytic framework in his work on Institutions and Organizations that describes three pillars in which to view an institution: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive. In his words, the analytic framework presented provides “conceptual tools to enable investigators to identify what ingredients were at work in varying situations while acknowledging that the elements were often combined together—especially in robust institutions.”<sup>4</sup> So just what is an institution and does the RCAF fit the definition?

Scott’s definition on an institution states that they “... comprise regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life.”<sup>5</sup> It is assessed that these elements are the building blocks of institutions that “provid[e] the elastic fibers that guide behavior and resist change.”<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most profound concept is that these elements are important on their own, but all three exist in an institution. Over time one element may dominate another, however, it is how they work in combination that defines an institution.<sup>7</sup> Further, they can be thought of as “... multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources ... [t]hey are relatively resistant to change.”<sup>8</sup> The RCAF is certainly a social structure, with multiple facets. Celebrating 100 years, one would consider them to be an enduring structure that is made up of symbology as every unit has its own heraldic crest, motto, and origins. The structure of the RCAF today is largely the same as it was 100 years ago. The RCAF then, can be considered an institution.

Having established the RCAF as an institution of its own merit, one can now look at the three pillars of the framework: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive. The remainder of this section will provide a short overview of each pillar. The framework is summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1: Three Pillars of Institutions

	<i>Regulative</i>	<i>Normative</i>	<i>Cultural-Cognitive</i>
<i>Basis of Compliance</i>	Expedience	Social obligation	Taken-for-grantedness  Shared understanding
<i>Basis of order</i>	Regulative rules	Binding expectations	Constitutive schema

<sup>4</sup> W. Richard Scott, “Institutions and Organizations. Ideas, Interests and Identities,” *M@n@gement* 17, no. 2 (2014): 138, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1552827253/abstract/3CB1F2AB2BA44B3EPQ/1>.

<sup>5</sup> W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities* (SAGE Publications, 2013), 71.

<sup>6</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 71.

<sup>7</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 70.

<sup>8</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 71.

<b><i>Mechanisms</i></b>	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
<b><i>Logic</i></b>	Instrumentality	Appropriateness	Orthodoxy
<b><i>Indicators</i></b>	Rules	Certification	Common beliefs
	Laws	Accreditation	Shared logics of action
	Sanctions		Isomorphism
<b><i>Affect</i></b>	Fear Guilt/Innocence	Shame/Honor	Certainty/Confusion
<b><i>Basis of legitimacy</i></b>	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Comprehensible
			Recognizable
			Culturally supported

Source: Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 75.

The regulative pillar consists of rules and regulatory process. This side of an institution is all about defining activities and ensuring conformance to the directives.<sup>9</sup> The military in general is a great example of a highly regulative institution with rules defining how one should look and dress to explicit orders on how to move and conduct any and all activities. The National Defence Act provides legal coverage that imposes sanctions that are managed by the military justice system. But rules and regulations are not implicitly about discipline and punishment to enact control, to the contrary, “[a]lthough the concept of regulation conjures up visions of repression and constraint, many types of regulation enable and empower social actors and action, conferring licenses, special powers, and benefits to some types of actors.”<sup>10</sup> Consider as examples the military’s ability to delegate financial authority and the command and control mechanisms. This could not be done were it not for the strict rules that exist to ensure accountability.

The emphasis of the normative pillar “is placed on normative rules that introduce a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life.”<sup>11</sup> This pillar includes values and norms, establishing both a goal and an appropriate means to get there. When looking at the broader CAF, this would be considered principles such as the military ethos, defining the generally accepted behaviour of individuals in the accomplishment of the military mission. A normative system will both constrain and

<sup>9</sup> Ryan J. Orr and W. Richard Scott, “Institutional Exceptions on Global Projects: A Process Model,” *Journal of International Business Studies* 39, no. 4 (June 2008): 73, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400370>.

<sup>10</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 75.

<sup>11</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 78.

empower social behaviour and action, “[t]hey confer rights as well as responsibilities, privileges as well as duties, licenses as well as mandates.”<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, the elements of the cultural-cognitive pillar are “the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and create the frames through which meaning is made.”<sup>13</sup> In this pillar Scott identifies that cultures are based on shared experiences and are not unitary systems, rather, they vary across the spectrum of the institution. CAF culture is often described from a service perspective, rather than a holistic culture of its own. From the colour of the uniform, to the organization of a unit or squadron and the imagery used, each of these elements shape the elements of the cultural-cognitive pillar. Symbols play a powerful role in shaping individual perception of actions and activities.

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<sup>12</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 79.

<sup>13</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 81.

## SNOWBIRDS

Squadrons are one of the core building blocks of the RCAF as they are responsible for the care, custody and operation of the various fleets of aircraft that the RCAF owns. Each squadron is mired in its unique history, heritage and traditions, but they all follow the same rules and responsibilities; the maintenance of airworthiness from the ground up. Building up from flying squadrons are the support networks providing logistics and administrative support, high level planning, facilities maintenance, engineering and technical support and so on.

The CAF Snowbirds are one such squadron and they are one of the most recognizable RCAF units in the country. As the CAF's only air demonstration acrobatic team, the Snowbirds have been flying in formation from coast to coast for over 50 years.<sup>14</sup> Season after season they wow audiences with their acrobatic skills, representing the highly professional and incredibly skilled team of pilots and maintainers within the RCAF. Established in 1971, they fly the CT-114 Tutor aircraft. Used as a pilot-training aircraft until 2000, the Tutor is a highly manoeuvrable, slow speed aircraft that is well suited to acrobatic formation flying.<sup>15</sup> The Snowbirds are flown by 431 Squadron, formerly known as the 431 "Iroquois" Squadron, previously a bomber squadron that flew the F-86 Sabre aircraft. Their squadron motto translates to "Warriors of the Air".<sup>16</sup>

The Tutors have been in service since the 1960's, an old fleet with old technology, the aircraft is no longer representative of modern militaries, nor does it provide any additional support to military tasks. What was once a fleet of training aircraft, are now solely being managed for the Snowbirds team, and they perform no operational or combat purpose.<sup>17,18</sup> A news article from 2016 indicated that the overall cost to run the squadron was \$4.3M annually.<sup>19</sup> In the world of aviation, this is relatively low, however, it does not include the cost of the various military personnel supporting and maintaining the fleet, nor is it clear whether this cost includes the expense of supporting the travel of the team to all of their engagements. The Tutor's have gone through numerous engineering assessments to extend their service life to allow the fleet to continue to fly today. According to The Globe and Mail in 2007, DND received a report in 2003 directing that the jets should be replaced immediately. They highlighted from the report that "With each passing year, the technical, safety and financial risk associated with extending the Tutor into its fifth decade and beyond, will escalate ...

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<sup>14</sup> Tim Feller, "The Snowbirds: A Canadian Legacy," *NAOC* (blog), June 27, 2013, <https://natoassociation.ca/the-snowbirds-a-canadian-legacy/>.

<sup>15</sup> Mike Sroka, *Snowbirds: Behind the Scenes with Canada's Air Demonstration Team* (Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publications, 2006), 39.

<sup>16</sup> Sroka, *Snowbirds: Behind the Scenes with Canada's Air Demonstration Team*, 23–24.

<sup>17</sup> Kathleen Harris, "Military Studies Extending Life of Snowbird Aircraft 20 Years Past Retirement," *CBC News*, July 26, 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/snowbirds-tutor-jets-replacement-1.3689876>.

<sup>18</sup> Frank Gunn, "Canadian Forces Spending \$755M to Replace Snowbird Jets," *National Post*, August 16, 2012, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-forces-spending-755m-to-replace-snowbird-jets>.

<sup>19</sup> Harris, "Military Studies Extending Life of Snowbird Aircraft 20 Years Past Retirement."

these risks are significant; however they are not easily quantified."<sup>20</sup> The article, amongst many, raised issues with the fleet after a pilot tragically lost their life after the aircraft crashed flying a training program before a show.

Certainly, at a time of reconstitution, one may question whether an air demonstration team funded by the CAF is feasible while efforts to modernize and recruit remain top priorities. The rest of this paper aims to evaluate the CDS/DM directive on reconstitution from an RCAF lens using the Snowbirds as a case study. The purpose of this paper is not to recommend whether the Snowbirds should be divested or put on pause to align with the reconstitution directive. Rather, they will showcase whether the Directive accurately considers the unique aspects that define the RCAF as an institution to hypothesize whether the anticipated institutional change will take root.

## **REGULATIVE PILLAR**

The regulative pillar of an institution is based on formal rules, laws and sanctions that are upheld by law but are also based on the unwritten codes of conduct.<sup>21</sup> Power is typically institutionalized and Scott highlights that public institutions primarily use negative sanctions (i.e. fines, incarceration).<sup>22</sup> Unpacking these statements leads one to easily recognize that the regulative structure is alive and well within the RCAF. All members and subgroups of the RCAF are legally bound by the laws in the National Defence Act. The Military Justice System is in place to uphold these laws and all members in the chain of command are responsible for the upkeep of good order and discipline within the institution. Further, all members are bound by the Code of Ethics and Values that defines expected behaviours. This, however, applies to all members of the CAF, not just the RCAF.

Let us consider then the unique rules and regulations that exist within the RCAF. All members in the air force are bound by the principles of airworthiness and by law to the Aeronautics Act. The Airworthiness Authority granted to the Minister of National Defence is sub-divided into three distinct categories, the Operational Airworthiness Authority, the Technical Airworthiness Authority, and the Airworthiness Investigative Authority. Each of these areas are well defined by written rules and expectations. Digging deeper, trades are managed by rules, standards, manuals and authorities. In the RCAF, technicians are held accountable for their work and can be charged if they are found to be negligent in their duties as technicians, pilots, etc. The Snowbirds are held to the same levels of accountability as all RCAF units, being held to the same standards and they maintain the same authorization levels.

The directive on reconstitution was issued as written orders directly from the CDS. The orders provided a number of initiatives to be worked on and assigned those tasks to specific level one (L1) organizations. This aligns with the regulative nature of the

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<sup>20</sup> Murray Brewster, "Replace Snowbird Jets 'immediately,' DND Told in 2003," *The Globe and Mail*, June 25, 2007, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/replace-snowbird-jets-immediately-dnd-told-in-2003/article1087881/>.

<sup>21</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 75.

<sup>22</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 76.

RCAF. Upon further scrutiny, there are perhaps some conflicting actions from the direction provided in the Directive and the rules and laws within the RCAF.

From the third line of operation, the directive aims to “enhance the CAF’s operational footprint against current and emerging threat streams, while generating capacity savings that can be reinvested elsewhere.”<sup>23</sup> And from the strategic priorities, it is directed to “cease activities and tasks that do not directly contribute to the growth of the CAF, operations, and modernization. Reinvest capacity toward activities and tasks that will contribute to achieving a reconstituted CAF.”<sup>24</sup> Both statements indicate the requirement to divest capabilities that do not provide added value to the CAF in attaining its objectives of growth, operations and modernization.

Consider, now, the Snowbirds squadron from this mindset. The RCAF are mandated to follow specific airworthiness rules and regulations that limit its ability to find further efficiencies. From a safety perspective, it is simply impossible to cut tasks within a squadron without taking unacceptable risk and incurring sanctions against its rules and regulations. Taking a step back from within the unit and considering the greater organization and looking at the directive through the squadron lens, does the continued operation of the Snowbird squadron support the orders within the directive?

A quick evaluation of the Snowbirds squadron against the CAF objectives of growth, operations and modernization provides some conflicting considerations. There may be an argument that the Snowbirds remain a recruitment tool, playing on the dreams and aspirations of the youth to one day be a part of that team flying overhead. However, the squadron certainly misses the mark from an operations and modernization perspective. The Snowbirds provide absolutely no combat capability and as a 1950’s aircraft, they are far from representing a modern fleet. Yet the decision remains to keep the Snowbirds flying throughout this period of recovery using resources that could otherwise be used in a more operationally focused unit. From the assessment of the regulative pillar, the proverb “actions speak louder than words” comes to mind. The intent of the directive is to cut out anything that does not provide operational value to provide support to more critical capabilities. From this assessment, the continued operation of the Snowbirds appears to be counter to this direction.

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<sup>23</sup> Canada, “CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution,” para. 11.c.3.

<sup>24</sup> Canada, “CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution,” para. 11.d.5.d.

## NORMATIVE PILLAR

The normative pillar centres around certification and accreditation and is morally governed.<sup>25</sup> Key concepts here are the establishment of standards and expectations of individuals. From the exacting standards of the Airworthiness Act, the RCAF manages a number of programs to ensure the compliance of all members. Aircraft maintenance is registered to quality management under the AF9000 Plus program (developed from the ISO 9001 standards for aviation) and are certified as aircraft maintenance, aircraft design and/or aircraft manufacturing organizations. Aircrew are held accountable through standards organizations and everyone is driven by airworthiness policies. These are managed by headquarters organizations (Aircraft Maintenance Standards and Evaluation Team; Directorate Technical Airworthiness and Engineering Services; Aircrew Standards), and regular auditing occurs to ensure that everyone operates to the accepted standards. Additionally, everyone in the RCAF is accountable to the Flight Safety program that is managed nationally by the Directorate of Flight Safety. All of these programs are supported by the squadrons and units with their own local representatives.

The goal of these programs are not simply to establish better business practices, they also work with individuals to establish buy-in and to have workers come up with solutions to ensure the continuous improvement of the squadrons and units within the RCAF. When describing the normative pillar, Scott astutely mentions that in institutions "... somebody somewhere really cares to hold an organization to the standards"<sup>26</sup> He goes on to say:

Sometimes that somebody is inside the organization, maintaining its competence. Sometimes it is an accrediting body, sending out volunteers to see if there is really any algebra in the algebra course. And sometimes that somebody, or his or her commitment is lacking, in which case the center cannot hold, and mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.<sup>27</sup>

These programs establish the unique norms and values within RCAF units. Central among these values is the unique airworthiness mindset within the RCAF. An airworthiness mindset is developed over time through the training, education and acculturation of air personnel throughout their careers.<sup>28</sup> Recognize the unique norms and values of the RCAF, just what kind of effects do they have on the institutionalization of the reconstitution directive?

The 2024 Snowbirds air show season consists of 21 events from May to September.<sup>29</sup> This is a reduction compared to the 36 shows lined up for the 2015 show

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<sup>25</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 80.

<sup>27</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 80.

<sup>28</sup> Christopher Coates, "Airmindedness - An Essential Element of Air Power - RCAF Journal - Royal Canadian Air Force," not available, December 8, 2014, <https://www.canada.ca/en/air-force/corporate/reports-publications/royal-canadian-air-force-journal/2015-vol4-iss3-09-airmindedness.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Department of National Defence Canada, "2024 Snowbirds Schedule," not available, April 10, 2013, <https://www.canada.ca/en/air-force/services/showcasing/snowbirds/schedule.html>.

season, however, it remains a busy schedule for an ageing fleet that requires increased maintenance and preparation to ensure the aircraft are safe and ready to fly.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, all of the normative aspects must be upheld. Maintenance organizations continue to be audited on a two-year cycle, aircrew train regularly to perform to the rigorous standards expected of RCAF Snowbird pilots, and the overarching flight safety program churns away to maintain accountability to the expected norms. With increasing vacancies throughout the institution, it is difficult to see where efficiencies can be located. These core normative aspects of the organization are so deep rooted in the culture that it is impossible to see an organization operating without them, and the potential risks to airworthiness of doing so truly puts a kibosh on any consideration of doing so as they are critical to sustaining operations.

With the overarching theme in the reconstitution directive to enhance the quality of life of service members, to strive for greater work/life balance, it is difficult to see from a normative perspective where any layers can be shed. According to Scott “[f]eelings associated with the trespassing of norms include principally a sense of shame or disgrace, or for those who exhibit exemplary behavior, feelings of respect and honor.”<sup>31</sup> Members of the RCAF have been inculcated with an airworthiness ideology and aspire to maintain those norms and values in everything that they do. So long as a squadron flies, all normative expectations will be upheld as no one wants to let the team down. This is in direct contravention to supporting work/life balance of members as they continue to do the same things, just with fewer people.

## **CULTURAL-COGNITIVE PILLAR**

The cultural-cognitive pillar is defined by common beliefs, shared logics of action and isomorphism. Compliance is based on a shared understanding and it gains legitimacy by being comprehensible, recognizable and culturally supported.<sup>32</sup> Cultures are not unitary across the CAF as shared experiences drive different perceptions across different groups. Either from one service to another, one branch/trade to another, or one squadron to another, the cultural belief that defines that group will vary. Even within those groups sub-groups exist that will spawn sub-cultures that may vary from the expected culture of the CAF. Scott further explains that “[a]ctors who align themselves with prevailing cultural beliefs are likely to feel competent and connected; those who are at odds are regarded as, at best, ‘clueless’ or, at worst, ‘crazy’.”<sup>33</sup> This desire to align with the culture is constantly reinforced in an RCAF squadron. With branding and symbology that is proudly displayed on one’s shoulder, to wearing different colour uniforms to represent their service, there is a desire to belong and to feel a part of the team. A study from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in 2001 on aviation safety asserts that “these specific aviation cultural features are described by military aviation

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<sup>30</sup> DualM studio-dualm dot com- web site design development Bulgaria Veliko Turnovo, “Snowbirds 2015 Schedule,” <https://aerobaticteams.net/>, accessed May 8, 2024, <https://aerobaticteams.net/en/resources/i215/Snowbirds-2015-Schedule.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 80.

<sup>32</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 75.

<sup>33</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 84.

practitioners as being 'fundamental' to the cohesiveness of military personnel.”<sup>34</sup> It is certainly no different in the RCAF.

One dominant underlying culture within the RCAF is the “can-do” attitude. A useful definition is “A can-do attitude is a positive mindset that believes anything is possible if you put your mind to it ... When you have a positive attitude, you do not give up when things get hard. You become more creative and find solutions to your problems.”<sup>35</sup> This certainly looks good on the surface, but in terms of aviation safety, it comes with risks. The ADF report identified that a can-do culture was a notable negative finding within ADF aviation.<sup>36</sup> The balance between the pride of successfully completing difficult tasks and the negative implications of the can-do attitude whereby individuals take on greater workloads in order to get the job done is delicate. The risks with this can-do attitude include questions on: how are they getting the job done? Have they taken any shortcuts? Did they double check their work on safety critical systems? Was anything missed or forgotten in the push to get the job done? This is far from what you want to hear when getting ready to fly.

To the contrary, there also exists a strong safety culture within the RCAF. In 2022, the Snowbirds performances were temporarily halted as a result of a technical issue found by its technicians.<sup>37</sup> With concerns on the timing of the parachute connected to the ejection system, the squadron made the difficult decision to ground the aircraft until each parachute could be checked and repacked. This is no small task and would take a considerable amount of time to correct. In this case, the safety culture prevailed, however, the pressure was now on to check each system before releasing the team to resume their flying program.

While the safety culture pushes all members of the RCAF to excellence, it is at risk when faced with the conflicting can-do culture. This can-do belief is in direct contravention to the directions purported in the reconstitution directive as everyone has a desire to get the job done, no matter the obstacles presented, they will find a way. “People with a can-do attitude are never afraid of doing a little extra work when required. They know that the result is almost always worth it, and even if it is not, they will put in the effort [rather] than letting down those who depend on them.”<sup>38</sup> While the directive seeks to optimize operational tempo and reduce non-essential activities to provide members with the breathing room to maintain a positive work-life balance it must first contend with the can-do culture.<sup>39</sup> What are non-essential activities, and how can one be defined? What guidance was issued to assist in assessing essential from non-essential tasks? Without clear articulation of what is deemed non-essential, all tasks remain essential, and the can-do culture will continue to push individuals to do it all. “People

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<sup>34</sup> Boyd Falconer, “Human Factors and the ‘can-Do’ Attitude: Strength or Weakness?,” n.d., 29.

<sup>35</sup> BagayaK, “14 Examples of Can Do Attitude,” *OpEx Managers* (blog), January 24, 2022, <https://opexmanagers.com/examples-of-can-do-attitude/>.

<sup>36</sup> Falconer, “Human Factors and the ‘can-Do’ Attitude: Strength or Weakness?,” 24.

<sup>37</sup> Department of National Defence Canada, “Technical Issue Will Temporarily Prevent the Snowbirds from Flying in Upcoming Performances,” news releases, June 24, 2022, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/news/2022/06/technical-issue-will-temporarily-prevent-the-snowbirds-from-flying-in-upcoming-performances.html>.

<sup>38</sup> BagayaK, “14 Examples of Can Do Attitude,” para. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Canada, “CDS/DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution,” para. 11.f.4.

with a can-do attitude are never afraid of doing a little extra work when required.”<sup>40</sup> The individual drive and pride in accomplishing the mission will continue to prevail in RCAF units, no matter the consequences. In order to recover the institution as it strives to find a new normal in these tumultuous times, the can-do attitude must be addressed. Otherwise, individuals will keep doing what they were doing and will continue to push to accomplish tasks, no matter the personal consequences.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This theoretical analysis looked at the Snowbirds squadron through the lens of Scott’s institutional analytical framework. The CIGI article *Automation and Future of Work* states that “organizations, especially large ones that employ many people, often struggle to change their operations even when a more cost-effective alternative exists. Organizations, and society more generally, are resistant to change.”<sup>41</sup> Considering the reconstitution directive through the lens of the three pillars, it is clear that work needs to be done if the anticipated changes are to take root and thrive.

While the RCAF is a highly regulative institution, and the directive was issued in the form of legal written orders, it was assessed that the continued operation of the Snowbirds appears to be counter to the directive. While some may say that the Snowbirds are useful in public relations and recruitment, one of the main initiatives of the directive, it can also be argued that the Snowbirds do not support operational goals nor do they align with the modernization initiatives of the RCAF. This conflict in what is written versus what is being done, may lead members to question the validity and real intent of the directive and question how much weight and effort they should place in its implementation if even the senior leadership are not taking it seriously.

The unique norms and values present within the RCAF run counter to the goals of creating a work/life balance for members as they are under the pressure to perform to the unwritten standards expected of their trades and professions. The oversight bodies in place to maintain the professional standards of airworthiness force members to strive for excellence. In the current geo-political climate, it is necessary to maintain those standards and expectations, but with fewer people to do the jobs, those who remain will increasingly feel the pressure to maintain the standards. Failing to meet these expectations can lead to feelings of shame disgrace. Should the positions in the oversight bodies be left vacant, sheer capacity will limit their ability to regulate and maintain the standards, potentially, as Scott mentions, releasing anarchy upon the world.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the dominant can-do culture within the RCAF will directly defy the reconstitution directive unless they are specifically told what not to do. Generations of aviators have lived up to this motto and the culture remains alive and well today. There is a great sense of pride associated with accomplishing missions, especially when it appears

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<sup>40</sup> BagayaK, “14 Examples of Can Do Attitude,” para. 12.

<sup>41</sup> Joel Blit, Samantha St. Amand, and Joanna Wajda, “Automation and the Future of Work: Scenarios and Policy Options,” Centre for International Governance Innovation, May 29, 2018, 5–6, <https://www.cigionline.org/publications/automation-and-future-work-scenarios-and-policy-options/>.

<sup>42</sup> Scott, *Institutions and Organizations*, 80.

as though the task would be impossible to realise. This underlying culture threatens both the safety culture of the RCAF and the overall success of the directive by creating an expectation that everything can and must be done.

Further research on service specific cultures should be conducted in a view to develop strategies to enhance the implementation of major institutional changes. Further, a high-level analysis of tasks within the RCAF should be conducted to assess what truly are considered non-essential tasks to assist the squadrons to shed the excess activities from their list of roles and responsibilities.

## **CONCLUSION**

The directive on reconstitution is a huge step in addressing major issues and shortfalls within the CAF. The intentions are clearly written and the goals are set. It is impossible to succeed that which is not first measured, so it is promising to see that performance measures and indicators have been identified and were reported in the 2022-23 Departmental Results Report.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, they remain an area of focus in the 2023-24 Departmental Plan.<sup>44</sup> This is a big step in demonstrating the CDS and the DM's level of commitment to the successful implementation of the directive. The analysis conducted in this paper aimed to highlight the anticipated deficiencies of its implementation by looking at it through Scott's institutional analysis framework. While the directive will see some success, it is clear that without considering the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive implications in the RCAF and developing strategies to counter any downfalls identified, full implementation and sustainment of the directive will fall flat.

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<sup>43</sup> Department of National Defence Canada, "Departmental Results Report 2022-2023," navigation page, December 19, 2023, 4–5, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/departamental-results-report/2022-23-index.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Department of National Defence Canada, "2023-24 Departmental Plan," 2023, 4–5, [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_mdndnd/D3-37-2023-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_mdndnd/D3-37-2023-eng.pdf).

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