

Chapter 2B – RECRUITING AND RETENTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL: CANADA

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2B.1 BACKGROUND

The current attention being focused on recruiting and retention within the Canadian Forces (CF) dates back to the early 1990s. The CF began facing the challenge of attracting a sufficient quantity of applicants to meet enrolment targets and retaining personnel. There are a number of factors internal and external to the CF that contributed to the recruiting and retention situation. Internally, the Canadian government embarked on severe budget reductions to all departments including the military. In order to meet those reduction targets, military personnel were given financial incentives to leave. Concurrently, a sustained increase in the pace of UN and NATO operations for the CF was also occurring. Moreover, partly to increase efficiencies within this smaller force, a number of occupations were amalgamated. These internal changes impacted negatively on retention. High attrition rates that greatly exceeded production rates, led to a critical shortage in many CF occupations. This additional internal factor significantly impacted on recruiting in the CF.

External factors also contributed to the recruiting and retention problems of the CF. A strong economy, significant competition with external agencies to recruit personnel, the deterioration of the CF's image as a major employer, and changing demographics with "baby boomers" reaching retirement resulted in the CF being unable to reach its enlistment targets. It was expected that, if solutions were not implemented, this recruiting situation was going to continue and further deteriorate with the CF facing a steady decline in its trained effective strength in the years to come (Hearn, 2000). On the retention side, the rapidly shifting demographic composition of Canadian society and the associated shifts in social values, especially amongst Canada's youth influenced retention in terms of understanding the issues important to junior serving military personnel. These internal and external factors contributed to the development of current recruiting and retention strategies.

2B.2 AIM

The purpose of this paper is to describe the recruiting and retention strategies used within the Canadian Forces. The majority of these recruiting strategies stemmed from the CF Recruiting Project that was initiated in 2000 in response to the concerns described above (Syed, 2001). The retention strategies that will be discussed are classified as those that directly influence members to remain in the CF and organizational strategies used to identify where attrition is occurring.

2B.3 RECRUITING

The CF Recruiting Project was initiated in response to the recruiting challenges facing the CF. Recruiting strategies that were encompassed in the project were aimed at restoring the CF to forces levels. Additional recruiting strategies introduced since then have also been aimed at increasing CF levels.

2B.3.1 CF Recruiting Project

The CF Recruiting Project served as a widespread review of human resources recruiting and selection processes and focused on the following principle areas: attraction and incentives to join, efficiency of recruiting processes and, capacity to train an expanded intake of recruits (Syed, 2000). The project was designed to re-establish the CF to forces levels by synthesizing and introducing a variety of recruiting strategies and initiatives. It was based on a total force approach and employed innovative solutions (Department of National Defence, 2003).

The CF Recruiting Project was designed to follow a three-year plan. The project's solutions were based on an incremental approach that maintained a fast pace to solve recruiting problems as quickly as possible. Its aim was to establish intakes with steady and graduated growth with the goal of restoring Regular Force levels before 2009/10 and Reserve Force levels before 2005/06. The project focused on re-establishing the CF to forces levels while considering demographic trends with anticipated increases in attrition. It aimed to re-establish applicant ratios of at least 2:1. The project also aimed to ensure that intake exceeded attrition. The CF Recruiting Project was also in line with policies that governed the CF including the Employment Equity Act (EEA) that addresses the issue of diversity in the CF. Recruiting strategies introduced since the CF Recruiting project have further developed to enhance recruiting for the CF.

2B.3.2 Diversity

Recognizing the active inclusion of the diverse representation of Canadian society is an important component of the CF's recruiting initiatives. In November of 2002, an Order in Council was passed bringing the CF under the Employment Equity Act (*The Act*). *The Act* recognizes four designated groups including women, Aboriginal peoples, visible minorities, and persons with disabilities. The EEA requires that employers ensure that designated groups are considered in recruiting efforts¹. Under the EEA, the CF is required to ensure that the internal representation of their employee population is comparable to the portion of the Canadian workforce population that is qualified for those occupations (Holden, 2003). Therefore, diversity and designated groups are considered in recruiting efforts, policies and procedures throughout the CF in all occupations including those with a shortage of personnel.

2B.3.3 Identifying Stressed Occupations

As part of the CF Recruiting Project, occupations that were understaffed were identified and the extent to which they were lacking personnel was indicated. A coding system was used to clearly identify occupations facing critical shortages. The focus of recruiting efforts and strategies was placed on critically understaffed occupations. The CF Recruiting Project ensured adequate use of a full range of intake and transfer programs within the CF and, also, introduced a number of innovative recruiting strategies to address the CF's recruiting

¹ The CF does not currently recruit persons with disabilities. The CF does, however, track self-identification data and accommodate CF members, where possible, if injured while serving.

problems. New recruiting initiatives can be grouped into the following categories: attraction, communications, and process and policy review (Department of National Defence, 2003).

2B.3.4 Use of Full Range of Intake and Transfer Programs

In response to the recruiting problems, the CF has sought to ensure the use of the full range of entry programs including component transfers and internal occupational transfers. There has also been an increase in the use of programs that acknowledge civilian skill sets and civilian training equivalencies to reduce the training requirements of individuals entering the CF. Intake and transfer of personnel in the CF takes into account the needs of the organization and considers the CF's capabilities and available resources as well as individual requests. Efficiency in processing occupational transfers by eliminating redundant processing of personnel as well as by ensuring that particular occupations do not become understaffed by staff requesting transfers from these occupations is considered. Encouraging transfer to understaffed occupations is another strategy to fill occupations in need of personnel. Training equivalencies are considered upon intake and for occupational transfers, especially for critically understaffed occupations (Department of National Defence, 2003).

2B.3.4.1 Recruiting Strategies Using a Full Range of Intake and Transfer Programs

The CF's recruiting strategies include acknowledging educational equivalencies upon intake as well as in occupational transfers in an attempt to efficiently staff various CF occupations (Department of National Defence, 1999). The potential for equivalencies for different CF occupations was determined. In addition, Colleges and Universities that offer accredited programs considered suitable for appropriate high skilled CF occupations were identified along with potentials for skilled civilians bypassing CF courses and/or training. Recruiters were provided with the appropriate information to make offers based on equivalencies directly to the candidate (Department of National Defence, 2003).

There has also been a focus in the CF on acquiring officer candidates with requisite degrees. In light of this focus, recruiting strategies have included in-service Military Medical, Dental, Legal, Chaplain, and Pharmacy Training Plans (Department of National Defence, 1988). Other plans considering equivalencies include the: Special Requirements Commissioning Plan, Special Commissioning Plan, Commissioning from the Ranks Plan, Civilian University Component of ROTP, and University Training Plan for NCMs.

2B.3.4.1.1 Special Requirements Commissioning Plan

The Special Requirements Commissioning Plan offers Chief Warrant Officers a commission in an occupation for which they have significant background, skill sets, and experience. An example would be offering a Supply Technician a commission into a Logistics occupation (Department of National Defence, 1987).

2B.3.4.1.2 Special Commissioning Plan

NCMs who have completed University degrees are selected and assigned to officer occupations for which their degrees are suitable with the Special Commissioning Plan. Candidates must successfully complete a selection board prior to filling the position (Department of National Defence, 1996a).

2B.3.4.1.3 Commissioning from the Ranks Plan

The Commissioning from the Ranks Plan involves selecting senior NCMs via a competitive selection board and offering them commissions for occupations in which they have significant backgrounds, skill sets,

and experience. Candidates must also successfully complete a selection board (Department of National Defence, 1994).

2B.3.4.1.4 Civilian University Component of ROTP

The CF sponsors University programs for selected CF occupations. Successful candidates must then complete basic officer training and attend University (Department of National Defence, 1995).

2B.3.4.1.5 University Training Plan for NCMs

The University Training Plan selects NCMs to attend University on full CF subsidization. Then they are commissioned in an occupation relevant to their degree (Department of National Defence, 1996b).

2B.3.5 Attraction

Attraction initiatives for recruiting include tools to recruit applicants other than advertising. These attraction initiatives are prioritized to occupations that are facing severe shortages. There has also been a shift in recruiting for the CF from enrolling mostly unskilled applicants to attracting skilled and experienced applicants who can bypass as much training as possible. Examples of fields requiring detailed skill sets are electronics and information technology. Attracting and enrolling skilled applicants is a priority for the CF. Of lower priority is attracting and enrolling semi-skilled applicants (those with some relevant civilian, or prior military, experience) followed by unskilled applicants. There are various tools employed by the CF to attract and enroll skilled applicants including conveying information at relevant forums, offering recruiting allowances and, subsidizing education (Department of National Defence, 2003).

2B.3.5.1 Recruiting Strategies for Attraction

2B.3.5.1.1 Conveying Information at Relevant Forums

Visits to academic institutions, briefings to relevant groups and attendance at job fairs are all examples of forums to convey information to attract applicants to the CF.

2B.3.5.1.2 Recruiting Allowances

There are three recruiting allowances available to CF applicants consisting of different monetary amounts. For example, \$10,000 and \$20,000 are awarded for specific NCM occupations depending on an applicant's technical and academic background and an allowance of \$40,000 is available to suitable Regular Force Direct Entry Officers in Engineering. These dollar amounts were arrived at by determining the average debt load of a college or university graduate in Canada. The justification for allowances is based on cost avoidance; the CF does not need to expend money and training resources for the initial occupational/educational MOC training (Department of National Defence, 2003).

2B.3.5.1.3 NCM Subsidized Education Program (NCMSEP)

Another incentive to attract applicants is the NCM Subsidized Education Program (NCMSEP). This program is designed to fill stressed NCM occupations. It offers an opportunity to qualified applicants to have their college education completely subsidized. The intent of this program is to maintain a steady flow of qualified recruits into occupations that have difficulty recruiting personnel similar to officer University training in many countries (Department of National Defence, 1989).

2B.3.6 Communications

The CF developed a complete communication plan including advertising as well as external communication and internal communication to serving members. The communications plan was aimed to restore the image of the CF and define it as the employer of choice. In order to pass this message, information was communicated on the opportunity to gain different work experience in the CF as well as opportunities for both professional and personal development and short-term and long-term careers. Competitive salaries, benefits and quality of life were also highlighted (Department of National Defence, 2003).

2B.3.6.1 Recruiting Strategies for Communications

2B.3.6.1.1 Advertising

Advertising was aimed at promoting the CF as an employer of choice. In addition to this, those CF occupations facing shortfalls were given a focus in advertising. Advertising was also targeted to, for example, trade magazines. Incentives such as recruiting allowances were also highlighted in advertising. Advertising aimed at Reserve personnel was localized to geographic areas to attract applicants to units in those areas. Advertising for the CF is presented nationally on television, at cinemas, on billboard signs, and in print.

2B.3.6.1.2 External Communication

External communication was achieved through media exposure through the following mediums: television, radio, Internet, newspaper, and journal and magazine articles. The CF website serves as a key source of information external to the CF. Interviews and press releases also aided in passing a message to the outside public that the CF is an employer of choice that is currently hiring.

2B.3.6.1.3 Internal Communication

Research has indicated that most applicants consider a career in the CF because they receive information from others through word of mouth. By being well informed, existing CF members can pass on information to the public aiding the CF's recruiting efforts. Therefore, the importance of keeping CF members adequately informed about recruiting initiatives was acknowledged. Internal communications were offered through articles in various CF publications and briefings for staff.

2B.3.6.1.4 OP CONNECTION

In response to many Canadians being unaware of the unique opportunities, benefits, challenges and rewards of CF careers, it was decided that the CF must adopt a more robust and cohesive recruiting strategy, using all appropriate CF assets in a coordinated campaign to connect with Canadians. This has been conceptualized as a military operation called OP CONNECTION. OP CONNECTION's theme "*Recruiting is everybody's business,*" was used by the Chief of Defence Staff to help revitalize the military recruiting culture. This meant that the complete Chain of Command including all sailors, soldiers, airmen and airwomen are to be engaged in an aggressive and comprehensive recruitment strategy by which they connect with greater numbers of Canadians in a meaningful way. At the national level, the main effort will focus on connecting with Canadians at seven major popular events that occur in regions across Canada (Department of National Defence, 2006).

2B.3.7 Process and Policy Review

Processes and policies for recruiting in the CF were reviewed and assessed for their efficiency and value added to the recruiting process. An attempt was made to make the recruiting process as efficient as possible by ensuring that processing time was minimized and any bottlenecks in the process were eliminated (Department of National Defence, 2003). Efforts were made to increase efficiency that included electronic transmission of information during the recruiting process (Syed, 2003). Selection criteria were also revised and measures were converted to an electronic format (Syed, 2003).

2B.3.7.1 Recruiting Strategies for Process and Policy Review

2B.3.7.1.1 Electronic Transmission of Fingerprints

There is an initiative to institute the electronic transmission of fingerprints during the recruiting process to save a significant portion of time in the recruiting process.

2B.3.7.1.2 Virtual Medical Files

There is an initiative to replace paper and pencil medical files with virtual files to decrease the time it takes to transmit this information during the recruiting process.

2B.3.7.1.3 Further Policy and Procedure Review

Other CF policies and procedures are also being reviewed and will be modified to increase efficiency in recruiting processes (Department of National Defence, 2003).

2B.3.7.1.4 Selection and Classification

Selection and classification criteria were also re-evaluated to determine whether selection criteria can be adjusted to increase the quantity of recruits without jeopardizing the quality of recruits. The Canadian Forces Aptitude Test (CFAT) is a cognitive ability test used to screen both officer and NCM applicants and to classify NCMs into military occupations. Based on research, cut off scores on the CFAT were adjusted slightly for some occupations where there could be an increase in the applicant pool and a low risk that the quality of recruits was being jeopardized (Syed, 2001).

2B.3.7.1.5 Conversion of Paper and Pencil Measures to Electronic

There is an effort in the CF to increase the efficiency of the recruiting process by converting measures such as an aptitude test and applicant surveys from paper and pencil to electronic (Syed, 2003). This would reduce processing time and increases the efficiency by which applicants can receive and complete the measures. Electronic information would also support the positive image of the CF as an organization employing the latest technology.

2B.3.7.1.6 E-Recruiting

E-Recruiting for the CF was introduced in October 2005. It consists of an on-line application service aimed at increasing efficiency and increasing the ability to contact potential recruits.

2B.3.8 Summary

Recruiting efforts in the CF focused on particular occupations facing critical shortages in personnel. These efforts have ranged from ensuring use of the full range of CF intake and transfer programs to new, innovative strategies to attract personnel. There have also been efforts to effectively communicate information about the CF and the opportunities it offers and to review policy and process to make it more efficient wherever possible. The CF Recruiting project put focus on strategies in those occupations that had shortages in personnel and on skilled applicants. These priorities were flexible depending on the needs of the organization as they change in the future. Results of efforts from the CF Recruiting Project have been positive in increasing applicant ratios for many occupations as well as increasing intake of new recruits. Long term effects of further recruiting initiatives will become apparent in the years to come and will be assessed in the future.

2B.4 RETENTION

The retention strategies that will be discussed are classified as those that directly influence members to remain in the CF and organizational strategies used to identify where attrition is occurring. Many of these initiatives are highlighted in a formal policy on retention titled the CF Retention Strategy ADM (HR-MIL) Group Action Plan (2001). In order to focus on the initiatives, a full explanation of the action plan will not be discussed. Instead, initiatives from the action plan that fall under the two categories will be discussed as they arise.

2B.4.1 Individual Influences

The most significant influence concerning current retention strategies used to encourage members to remain in the CF was the creation of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veteran's Affairs (SCONDVA) in 1997. The committee was made up of 11 members of Parliament from all three parties with official standing in the House of Commons. It was tasked to review the social and economic challenges faced by CF members and their families and come up with a set of recommendations designed to ease the unique burdens facing CF members and their families.

Their work was not mandated to examine retention specifically. Instead, it was focussed on improving the quality of life of personnel and their families. Their inclusion into this discussion came about from recent exploratory research that revealed many of the issues raised during their meetings about QOL were very similar to those being mentioned by military personnel as reasons for leaving (Dunn and Morrow, 2002). This is not surprising. It is not illogical to conclude that those people who have a good quality of life are probably less likely to leave the military than those whose quality of life is poorer. Moreover, these recommendations are directly related to the Task Group theme of the link between quality of life and retention.

Eighty-nine recommendations were developed by the committee and can be categorized as:

- a) Pay and Allowances – compensation for work (20 recommendations);
- b) The Housing Portfolio – accommodations (21 recommendations);
- c) The Injured, Retired, and Veterans – care of injured personnel (16 recommendations);
- d) The Military Family (16 recommendations);
- e) Transitions including recognition, work expectations and conditions of service (14 recommendations);
and
- f) The future (2 recommendations).

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Before discussing the results in detail, it is important to reiterate that the CF focus on measuring quality of life has been to assess the extent to which the various recommendations have improved peoples' quality of life. As such, there has been no direct link between the introduction of quality of life (QOL) initiatives to address these problems and any increased or decreased likelihood to remain in the military.

The information used to assess the extent to which various initiatives had improved peoples' quality of life was gathered through administration of a quality of life survey that was given to over 12,000 CF members in February, 2001. Almost 4,000 responses were received, representing a return rate of approximately 35%. The results were representative of the CF population for gender, rank, and base, however, Air Force personnel were over-represented, and Army personnel were under-represented. Consequently, the overall means throughout the report were weighted by CF element to make the results more externally generalizable.

The results outlined the relative success of these initiatives in affecting the QOL of CF members. For the purposes of this group, insight into these areas was obtained through two questions that were asked for each initiative. The first question asked the respondent how important this initiative was to enhancing the QOL of CF members. This question provided some insight into the relative importance of each of the initiatives and, more importantly, allowed the Project Management Office (PMO) QOL access to more concrete information that will help determine the initiatives that should receive top priority in the future. Additionally, it may provide an idea of which cluster of initiatives (i.e., QOL pillars) is most critical to enhancing the QOL of CF members and their families. The final question was the most direct indicator of the effectiveness of the initiative as it asked the member to rate his/her satisfaction with the initiative. Together, these questions along with one other about awareness of the initiatives provided a comprehensive review of the initiatives that had been implemented by the PMO QOL at the time of the survey and provides direction for the way forward.

There were a number of initiatives to improve the pay and benefits of Regular and Reserve Force personnel. The most significant set of actions were a series of pay raises that took place between 1998 and 2001, the most significant of which took place in 1998. While no formal assessment was conducted on this issue, related research provides conflicting information. During focus groups on why people leave the military people were asked what issues would lead them to leave the military. Pay was discussed as an issue in the sense that when people felt overwhelmed with work and extra responsibilities, they believed that their pay was not sufficient. Overall, they did not report problems with pay. On the other hand, one of the questions on the Quality of Life Survey asked members and spouses to name the three most important areas that the Canadian Forces should change, modify or adjust in order to improve theirs and their families' quality of life. The most important area mentioned by both groups was a pay increase.

Generally, the respondents viewed all of the initiatives developed and implemented by the Project Management Office (PMO) QOL as at least somewhat important. However, the most important initiatives² according to this sample of respondents were the:

- a) **Post Living Differential Program** – stabilizes the cost of living of CF members and families with respect to regional differences to ensure that they enjoy a relative and predictable standard of living no matter where they serve); and
- b) **Compassionate Travel Assistance** – to provide transportation at public expense for regular force members and their spouses due to the serious illness or death of an immediate family member of the CF member or spouse.

² Responses on the **importance** scale were scored as follows: 1 = Not at all important; 2 = Unimportant; 3 = Somewhat unimportant; 4 = Neutral; 5 = Somewhat important; 6 = Important; 7 = Very important.

The lowest rated initiative in terms of importance was the second language-training program for spouses. Other examples of some of the initiatives that were assessed include:

- a) Provision of emergency childcare services when short notice deployments are announced;
- b) Provision of the Family Care Assistance Program. This gives financial assistance to help offset family care costs that the member pays that are in excess of those normally paid;
- c) Use of the housing relocation service;
- d) Introduction of the Military Quarters Repair Program (housing);
- e) Creation of operational trauma and stress support centers;
- f) Providing employment assistance to spouses when families move to help them find jobs and maintain qualifications;
- g) Improving access of CF programs and services in peoples' language of choice; and
- h) Numerous initiatives aimed at improving pay and benefits (e.g., acting pay, pension reform, special service allowances, overtime).

In terms of satisfaction³ with the various programs, unfortunately, although almost 4,000 surveys were returned, on average, a very small number of respondents rated their satisfaction with the programs. This should not be seen as surprising as these programs were very recently implemented and members may not have been aware of the services nor had an opportunity to use them. Nonetheless, respondents did not view any of the programs as more than somewhat satisfactory, raising a cause for concern.

A number of initiatives from the CF Retention Strategy Action Plan relate to influencing individuals to remain in the CF. Firstly, the organization that conducts most of the training within the CF was directed to review the entry-level training philosophy and practices in their schools to ensure that the emphasis was on individual development, rather than selection, and that military socialization built commitment rather than tested it.

Secondly, there was direction to complete research on the re-organization of military occupations to:

- Be operationally effective in meeting its defence mission, now and well into the future;
- Manage the world of military work more cost-effectively; and
- Make the CF an “employer of choice” by offering a rewarding career with options.

Based on the results of this research, there was further direction to develop ways to eliminate rank stagnation (personnel stuck in the same rank for long periods of time due to systemic recruiting or retention policies that had been implemented years earlier) present in some occupations.

Thirdly, there was direction for high priority to be given to addressing the quality of life issues addressed from the SCONDVA hearings that were previously discussed. Fourthly, there was direction that current and recently expanded educational upgrading programs and opportunities were to be advertised more publicly. Fifthly, there was direction to develop appropriate means for communicating the “goodness” of the CF pay and benefit package to members.

³ Responses on the **satisfaction** scale were scored as follows: 1 = Completely dissatisfied; 2 = Dissatisfied; 3 = Somewhat Dissatisfied; 4 = Neutral; 5 = Somewhat satisfied; 6 = Satisfied; 7 = Completely satisfied.

Finally, there was direction concerning the application of policy in the individual case. If the CF genuinely hope to become an employer of choice, there was a need to establish and maintain a culture in personnel administration that makes all members feel that they have received the kind of treatment that an employer of choice would provide – prompt, fair, and considerate of their interests. Admittedly, there are many circumstances in which decisions and actions are constrained by rules and regulations, but there are also lots of situations, which afford considerable opportunity to be creative in the solutions to individual problems. Therefore, when an administrative decision that affects an individual member is being considered, a final check on the rightness of the decision should be given in the form of the following question: “What would an employer of choice do?”

With the exception of the SCONDVA hearings discussed earlier, there has been no evaluation of these initiatives from Retention Strategy Action Plan.

2B.4.2 Organizational Initiatives

Organizational initiatives should not be confused with the organizational policies that were just discussed. Those policies were designed to improve peoples’ quality of life and to encourage them to remain in the military. The organizational initiatives discussed in this section refer to existing and new monitoring activities to assess the level of and reasons for attrition. Specifically, there is an initiative that examines reasons for leaving across all occupations in the military and that looks at specific occupations. In addition, specific policies have been revised to directly and indirectly encourage people to remain in the military longer.

These initiatives originate from the CF Retention Strategy ADM (HR-MIL) Group Action Plan (2001). One of its key elements is direction that a tri-level division of responsibility for monitoring attrition and developing corrective retention measures within the CF be implemented. Under this approach, an organization will be responsible for managing CF-wide attrition, another will be responsible for managing occupation-specific attrition, and Unit Commanders will be responsible for managing unit-level attrition. Inherent in this division of responsibility is the idea that retention is a leadership responsibility and that every commander, supervisor, and staff member must do his/her part.

Looking at national -level attrition, the CF has been administering a questionnaire to retiring personnel to determine why they were leaving. An analysis completed in 2001 (Lucas) revealed that the top three reasons people chose for leaving the military were:

- 1) “I am taking advantage of my pension and potential civilian salary” (8.3% or 783 responses);
- 2) “I am going back to school” (6.4% or 599 responses); and
- 3) “I want to increase my family stability by establishing roots in the community” (6.3% or 596 responses).

Of interest, 82% of those who chose the item about going back to school were less than 35 years old and 65% had less than 9 years of service. 78% of those who chose the option of taking advantage of their pension had more than 20 years service.

The questionnaire used to gather this information was developed in 1992 and has recently been revised to better reflect the changes in the Canadian Forces described in the introduction. Along with this survey, an exit interview is being developed to allow Commanding Officers to assess reasons for leaving of subordinates that might be unique their units. No data has been gathered using these instruments.

To examine attrition in specific occupations, an initiative called the Retention Intervention Process (RIP) and was developed. It was established as a monitoring system to analyze trends in total and voluntary attrition in the Regular Force. Specifically, it is meant to examine the occupations that were experiencing significant attrition. Its benefit is that it can analyze attrition patterns and identify problems as they occur in very specific occupations. Occupations are analyzed in terms of the demographic breakdown of where the attrition is occurring as well as examining any trends for why people in those occupations may be leaving.

This initiative filled an outstanding gap with retention in the Canadian military context. Attrition, relatively speaking, is low. Total attrition is around 6% while voluntary attrition is about 4%. Attrition patterns are linked to occupation and tenure. Some non-commissioned member (NCM) occupations suffer nearly all voluntary attrition during the early career years. While attrition levels are similar for Officers and NCMs, leaving patterns vary. Universal retention strategies are not the panacea for these retention issues. Healthcare, firefighter and administrative occupations have been analyzed as well as an analysis of total Canadian Forces attrition (Carrick and Currie, 2002; Currie, 2002; Carrick, 2003; Currie, 2003a; Currie, 2003b; Currie, 2003c). The focus of the RIP is on voluntary leavers where retention initiatives can have an effect.

The results from the analysis the 2002/2003 data describe what information can be obtained using the RIP. Early career release continued an upward trend with 40% of all NCM voluntary attrition occurring by year 3 and 30% of all Officer voluntary attrition by year 8. While this is significant, it needs to be put into the context that the first NCM engagement lasts three years and the first Officer engagement lasts nine years. They are free to choose to leave or to sign up for another engagement. Thus, strictly speaking, this is not unforecast attrition. However, more importantly, both groups experienced an increase in both voluntary and total attrition in year 0. Twenty percent of the NCM **total attrition** occurred by day 365. In other words, over 600 NCMs were released before their 1st anniversary of service. The Officer Corps also suffer 20% **total attrition** by day 365, accounting for another 146 members. On the other hand while 590 NCMs voluntarily left in year 0, only 91 voluntarily left at or after the 35 year point. For Officers 146 left in year 0 and 72 left at or after year 35. Another set of organizational initiatives that have taken place are policies that have been revised to encourage people to stay in the military longer. An organizational method to retain people longer was to change the terms of service under which military personnel are employed. Table 2B-1 describes how service contracts were structured in the military before the rules were changed. Table 2B-2 describes the new policy about how long and in what form personnel serve in the military.

Table 2B-1: Service Contract Structure

Term of Service	Pre-April 2005
Non-Commissioned Members	
1) 1 st Basic Engagement	3 years service
2) 2 nd Basic Engagement	3 more years service
3) Intermediate Engagement	20 years service
4) Indefinite Period of Service	Up to age 55
5) Continuing Engagement	Five year term
Officers	
1) Short Service Engagement	9 years service
2) Intermediate Engagement	20 years service
3) Indefinite Period of Service	Up to age 55
4) Continuing Engagement	Five year term

Table 2B-2: Length and Type of Service

Term of Service	Post-April 2005
Non-Commissioned Members and Officers	
1) Variable Initial Engagement	3 – 9 years service
2) Intermediate Engagement	25 years service
3) Indefinite Period of Service	Up to age 55
4) Continuing Engagement	Variable length up to 5 years

It can be seen that the length of service of contracts have increased in almost all cases. CF members were most interested in the extension of the Intermediate Engagement from 20 years’ service to 25 years’ service. If people were offered contracts beyond their initial engagements, the new policy encouraged them to stay for five years longer than the previous Intermediate Engagement. The encouragement took the form of a concurrent revision of the pension plan to make it more attractive to stay those extra five years than it was previously.

An administrative change to service regulations designed to address a human rights issue has given the added benefit of increasing the amount of time people can serve in the military. For those members enrolled on or after 1 Jul 04, their Compulsory Retirement Age (CRA) has increased from age 55 to 60. It means that they can serve until age 60 instead of at 55. For those members serving as of 1 Jul 04, their normal (CRA) was 55. They can now select to retire at age 60. While this change took place to address another issue unrelated to retention, an indirect consequence of the policy will be to allow more people to serve longer in the military.

2B.4.3 Summary

Retention strategies have taken the indirect form of individual initiatives that were designed to positively influence members' quality of life. They have also taken the form of monitoring activities to enable the military to identify where attrition problems are occurring and to attempt to correct them. Finally, organizational policies were developed to encourage military personnel to remain in the military longer. In the first two cases, mechanisms are in place to assess strategies and describe the population of those leaving. With additional information collected the effectiveness of and need for current and new strategies can be determined.

2B.5 CONCLUSION

Recruiting and retention problems have been assessed in the CF and strategies have been put into place to respond to these problems. There has been an effort to identify those occupations within the CF that are facing a shortage of personnel and recruiting and retention efforts have been targeted to those occupations. There has also been a shift from recruiting unskilled applicants to recruiting skilled applicants who may have civilian qualification equivalencies and can fill the occupations as quickly as possible. Retention efforts also focus on occupations with high attrition rates. The recruitable population is expanded and includes ex CF members, older applicants who may want to better their pension, individuals with civilian qualification equivalencies, and existing CF members transferring to occupations with shortages in staff. Both recruiting and retention strategies attempt to address the concerns of members who leave the CF. For example, the issue of pay is addressed in a recruiting strategy offering recruiting allowances. The same issue is addressed in a retention effort passing information to members that CF pay is comparable to civilian pay for equivalent work. The recruiting and retention strategies of the CF are fairly recent. Though they've shown immediate positive impacts, the long term effects of the strategies will be determined in the future.

2B.6 FUTURE STRATEGIC FOCUS ON RECRUITING AND RETENTION

Future formulation or amendments of recruiting and retention initiatives will follow the guidelines presented below. In other words, when additional retention or recruiting or retention strategies are being developed, they will follow one or a number of the elements below. They are contained in the Military HR Strategy 2020 Plan (2002). HR 2020 derives its own HR strategic objectives, from which all future HR policies, programs and projects will develop. This strategy has been developed to apply to both Regular and Reserve components.

2B.6.1 Recruitment

The Recruitment Strategy is a major initiative to correct critical shortages in the near and midterm. The critical elements of the strategy are:

- 1) Improved advertising and attraction by "branding" the CF as an "employer of choice" and targeted attraction to critically short occupations.
- 2) Increased internal communications to serving members.
- 3) Establishment of effective relationships and partnerships with educational institutions and guidance counselors.
- 4) Use of recruiting incentives on a selective basis to improve attraction into critically short occupations.

- 5) Use of the full range of entry programs, including the use of component transfer, occupational transfer and an increased use of programs that recognize civilian skills and training to reduce training requirements.
- 6) Improved efficiency of recruiting procedures and improved basic training that reduces training losses.
- 7) Focus on a diverse applicant pool.

Department of National Defence. (2002). Military HR Strategy 2020 – Facing the People Challenges of the Future. Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence.

2B.6.2 Retention

Many of the components of the retention strategy are included in the other themes of well-being, professional development, leadership, and communication. Key to the strategy are initiatives that strengthen the social contract. Besides living up to our obligations to provide fair pay and tangible benefits, security, equitable treatment and support, retention is to be seen as a leadership responsibility consistent with building a retention culture. The CF is developing recruitment and retention strategies that will position a military career as a profession of choice. The Retention Strategy Tracking Plan will support the successful sustainment of our retention strategies and contribute to the overall communication and accountability efforts. In an effort to continue the retention strategy the CF will:

- 1) Develop flexible terms of service and employ contemporary work practices to meet a broader range of organizational and personal needs and to attract and retain “skilled” workers based upon Canadian demographic trends.
- 2) Create career fields that enhance career flexibility through transition assistance and choice, and enable the rotation of personnel, providing respite from operational tempo and access to developmental opportunities.
- 3) Improve participation in employment and career decisions while improving the match between personal aspirations and employment. This could involve advertising available positions and inviting internal application based upon a merit system.
- 4) Maintain policies to ensure a harassment free environment and continued emphasis on diversity of all forms.
- 5) Develop fair and effective performance evaluation procedures that motivate, provide performance feedback and developmental opportunities, that apply at the individual and team level.
- 6) Maintain effective mechanisms of voice and conflict resolution processes that resolve issues at the lowest level and offer efficient recourse to those who believe they have been treated unfairly.
- 7) Provide members with adequate spiritual, medical, dental, social and other support in times of both war and peace.
- 8) Develop policies that support military families as an essential contribution to operational effectiveness and the maintenance of morale. Special effort will be taken to ensure the support and care of military families during operational deployments and the re-integration of personnel after deployments.
- 9) Recognize the value of exceptional performance through a system of commendations, honours and awards, the significance of which must be clearly recognized and viewed with credibility.