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by Charlotte Duval-Lantoine

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POLICY PERSPECTIVE

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by Charlotte Duval-Lantoine
CGAI Operations Manager and Fellow

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The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is at a major inflexion point. The entrenchment of great-power competition means that sets of threats are multiplying across maritime, air, space, cyber and land domains. The technological advances of adversaries' militaries require the CAF to undergo profound digital transformation and the increased incidence and severity of natural disasters in Canada are putting extreme pressures on the military to be operationally effective across a very diverse set of missions.

In parallel, the military is experiencing a personnel shortage that will take five to 10 years to correct (according to the 2021–22 Department Results), an urgency to modernize and replenish stocks and an obligation to tackle misconduct issues. At the end of the 2021–22 fiscal year, only 34.4 per cent of surveyed service members said they felt "that the Canadian Armed Forces provides a reasonable quality of life" for them and their families and 61.7 per cent of occupations were in "critical shortfalls." It is to the point that operational effectiveness is in serious jeopardy; in January 2023, Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre admitted to journalist Mercedes Stephenson that the military was not ready for the "challenges that lie ahead."

Business as usual for the Canadian military is no longer an option. Many strategic documents, such as the Reconstitution Directive, the Digital Campaign Plan and the Operational Sustainment Modernization Strategy,[1] have recognized this. The CAF needs to undergo profound transformation to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and strategic direction is urgently needed. The military and its leadership must go beyond siloed strategies that pursue different objectives in isolation from one another.

Inherent to this required military transformation is conduct-related culture change (commonly referred to as "cultural evolution" among the CAF's senior leadership). Former justices Marie Deschamps and Louise Arbour, as well as senior military officers, have explicitly said that combating misconduct and improving diversity will improve operational effectiveness.[2] To succeed in this endeavour, the military needs to understand and recognize that its historical inability to tackle those issues is not an anomaly. Similarly, the CAF's troublesome personnel

[1] Department of National Defence (DND), "CDS/ DM Directive for CAF Reconstitution," October 6, 2022, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/dm-cds-directives/cds-dm-directive-caf-reconstitution.html.; Gen. Wayne Eyre, Chief of the Defence Staff, "Canadian Armed Forces Digital Campaign Plan, 2022," Foreword, 2, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/canadian-armed-forces-digital-campaign-plan.html.; DND, "Operational Sustainment Modernization Strategy," 2023, 4, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/canadian-armed-forces-operational-sustainment-modernization-strategy.html.

[2] Marie Deschamps, "External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces," 2015: 26, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/sexual-misbehaviour/external-review-2015.html.; Jonathan Vance, "The Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jonathan Vance, Addresses Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces," *Canadian Military Journal* 16, no. 3, Summer 2016: 7, http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol16/no3/PDF/CMJ163Ep6.pdf.; Louise Arbour, "Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review," 2022: 320, 36, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/report-of-the-independent-external-comprehensive-review.html.

shortage should not be unexpected, as the Auditor General's report warned as recently as 2016 about significant issues with recruitment and retention.

While conduct issues are significant and have been subject to public scrutiny since at least the mid-1990s, limiting the CAF's cultural problems to conduct is short-sighted. The CAF's core cultural challenge is that its structure and culture promote insulated short-term goals and discourage monitoring and accountability. In Arbour's words, the current state of sexual violence in the military is "partly the result of an unyielding adherence to an impenetrable hierarchical structure that is determined to perpetuate itself, good and bad, and constant mobility as part of career progression, leading to chaotic management and a lack of accountability."[3]

The CAF needs to reckon with the systemic factors inherent to its structure that have impeded culture change not only for a wide range of misconduct (gender-based, racially motivated or homophobic), but also for effective procurement, digital transformation and military modernization overall.

The root of the military's problem is a multitude of dysfunctional systems that no statement of values from general officers, no discussion of culture at the unit level and no training program can fully overcome. To start moving towards an organizational climate that is diverse, equitable, inclusive and healthy for its members, but also capable of defending Canada against the complex and multifaceted threat environment, senior leaders need to start examining the CAF as an interconnected system of systems. They must look more granularly at why, across the board, the military seems to be struggling with the daily activities and projects that are critical for mission success in the 21st century.

When it comes to misconduct, those systemic factors intersect with white supremacy, misogyny, colonialism, homophobia and racism, as well as with assumptions and beliefs of what and whose labour is rewarded, and who the ideal service member is. But assumptions about valuable work and performance also impact all other functions, from combat roles to administrative positions. What gets rewarded gets done; if a type of behaviour, an occupation or even posting is not as valued as the others, it will be difficult to see it being pursued or done enthusiastically. This is not to say that looking at conduct-related change through the lens of structural reforms in the CAF will fix the problem. Rather, this piece aims to highlight parallels between different institutional challenges the CAF faces, other activities which it deems essential for its modernization and the hurdles that the push for culture change – including sexual violence and discrimination – has to overcome before specific efforts can be outlined.

If the CAF wants to succeed in the extensive initiatives it is implementing, it will have to address the root of the issue, which is what the culture values. Addressing that will require a profound rethinking of how the CAF manages its priorities and its resources (including personnel) as well as a comprehensive set of structural reforms.

[3] Ibid., 16.

What Is Culture?

Let us use the definition the CAF embraced in its most recent ethos, *Trusted to Serve*: "[a] shared and relatively stable pattern of behaviours, values and assumptions that a group has learned over time as an effective means of maintaining internal social stability and adapting to its environment, and that are transmitted to new members as the correct ways to perceive, think and act in relation to these issues."[4] This definition underlines that culture is a group process which is learned and taught and which acts as guidance to deal with the familiar and the unfamiliar. Missing from this definition is how the group learns those "behaviours, values and assumptions." According to organizational culture and behaviour expert Edgar Schein, "culture also covers mission, strategy, structure and basic operations."[5] This means that looking at the way the organization functions is important in determining the culture itself, how it came to be and how it is reinforced. It also entails that structure needs to change to contribute to culture change.

Introspection is an essential step to changing an organization's culture, but proceeding with caution is critical. As Schein warns, culture creates a sense of identity and involves some of the most ingrained assumptions and beliefs about oneself, the group and what makes them and their actions preferable to others. Therefore, unweaving these beliefs and assumptions for the sake of changing them can be "anxiety provoking."[6] However, it remains an important exercise to go through to begin the change process. Rather than starting by trying to pinpoint the basic assumptions, we can work our way backwards and look at the mechanisms through which an organization institutionalizes culture. Schein splits those mechanisms into two categories: primary and secondary. They are summarized in the table below:

Table 1: Mechanisms that Institutionalize Culture[7]

Primary Mechanisms (Those that embed culture)	Secondary Mechanisms (Those that reinforce and stabilize culture)
What leaders systematically and consistently pay attention to, measure and control	Organizational design and structure
How leaders react to incidents and crises	Organizational systems and procedure
Allocation of resources	Rites and rituals

[4] DND, *Canadian Armed Forces Ethos: Trusted to Serve*, 2022: 53, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/canadian-armed-forces-ethos-trusted-to-serve.html.
[5] Edgar Schein and Peter Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2017), 10.
[6] Ibid., 23.
[7] Adapted from Schein, 183.

Setting the example, teaching, coaching	The organization's physical architecture
How leaders reward and give status	Stories told about important people and events
Recruitment, selection, promotion, removal of members	Ethos, value statements, doctrines

In short, leaders set their intentions and priorities and create the systems and structures they need for members to follow suit. The CAF must examine those mechanisms if it wants to change its culture. But to identify them, leaders (especially the institutional/strategic leaders – more on that later) need to ask themselves three questions.

1. *What Does the Organization Value?*

The straightforward answer would be to recite the values outlined in *Trusted to Serve* or the Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces Code of Values and Ethics. But we want to look at this question in a more systematic way. When looking at individuals, the answer will touch on the expression of those values. What kind of behaviour is expected? For example, in *Trusted to Serve*'s "Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviour Matrix," one of the behaviours associated with courage is "[m]ake the right choice, weighing the alternatives." What would this look like in practice?

At the institutional level, what the organization values is translated into resources (i.e., money, time, personnel and developing the necessary expertise). Career and personnel management processes, including succession planning and what type of occupations reach the highest ranks of the organization also powerfully signal the type of labour and behaviour the institution rewards the most. For example, until recently, training and instructor-related postings were considered a hindrance to career progression in the Canadian military. Following the Arbour report and the partial implementation of recommendation 23, the CAF now grants instructor postings at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School the same weight as operational deployments.[8]

2. *How Do You Define and Evaluate Performance and Excellence?*

While parts of this question could also be answered by looking at *Trusted to Serve* – which defines excellence as "the pursuit and achievement of strength of character and higher levels of professional competence to improve conduct and performance" – getting to an answer also requires a more granular examination of the performance evaluation system.[9] Looking at the criteria laid out in the Performance and Competency Evaluation (PaCE), the competencies

[8] Arbour, 214–215; Jocelyne Therrien, "External Monitor Report: First Status Report — May 2, 2023," 4.
[9] DND, *Trusted to Serve*, 27.

outlined therein, what is ranked and why and the outcomes they lead to, is a good place to start.[10] It is also important to explore whether or not the appraisal system is aligned with long-term objectives and organizational projects. But formal appraisal is only one piece of this puzzle. Studying how evaluators may rank and prioritize different competencies, but also their interpretations of how different competencies may translate into behaviours (and their awareness that those can vary based on cultural and societal backgrounds, including gender expression) is also necessary to answer this question. Finally, to get a complete picture of how performance and excellence are defined and evaluated we must assess the conduct of selection and merit boards, as well as succession planning.

3. *What Are You Ready to Accept for the Sake of Performance?*

This question aims to trigger a reflection about conduct versus performance and where to draw the line. Throughout organizations, there seems to be a connection between good performance and what type of behaviour is deemed acceptable from the highest performers. The example of the allegations of widespread sexual violence in Hockey Canada teams and their cover-up at the institutional level shows what happens when this view is taken to the extreme. Where an organization, its culture and its members draw the line when it comes to the conduct of its highest performers can offer some insights into the type of work they find most valuable, and what they are ready to sacrifice for it. It does not mean that a conscious choice is made; those decisions are most often the result of individual and cultural biases.

Examining culture on such a scale is a herculean task and Arbour's 2022 report has done critical work in examining how the CAF's structures and processes have contributed to the concerning incidence of sexual violence in its ranks. This is also a task that Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC) can undertake to tailor its "culture evolution" strategy. Although Arbour's report focuses on sexual misconduct, many of the issues she outlines are systemic and impact other aspects of the CAF's attempts to change its culture and modernize.

Systemic Barriers

Expecting the entire CAF to pause, reflect on its overall culture and come up with solutions while dealing with its various sets of mandates, personnel shortages and $1 billion worth of budget cuts is unrealistic. Another approach is necessary. Identifying systemic structural issues that can be effectively addressed is an important first step in the change process. Although this exercise helps answer the what of the issues instead of the why, it can still go a long way to solving significant problems. It pushes for the observer to look beyond a certain aspect of organizational functioning to try to see parallels and overlaps in order to find a broader, more holistic solution.

[10] Details on the Performance and Competency Evaluation (PaCE) are not available to the public. See http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/pace-epc/en/index.asp?Redirect=/pace-epc/en/competencies.asp.

To underline how systemic and structural those barriers are to reforms in the CAF, this study examines reports from the assistant deputy minister (Review Services), the Office of the Auditor General and work from a variety of commentators on the topics of procurement, retention and recruitment, the management of postings outside of Canada (OUTCAN postings), digital transformation, information management, conduct and defence supply chains. This section will highlight the issues that feature the most in those reports.[11]

Lack of Resources

The first identifiable barrier is the discrepancy between the resources allocated and the specific activity's objectives.[12] Resources can include money, personnel, training and performance indicators. All the consulted reports mentioned this issue. The causes of a resource-mission mismatch can be political (e.g., the government of Canada ordering the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) to meet NORAD and NATO air power requirements despite the RCAF having not enough personnel and aircraft – the aging CF-18 – to do so); strategic (e.g., lack of clarity in policy documents; key performance indicators not matching the objectives of the activities); operational (e.g., lack of training); and tactical (e.g., personnel and equipment shortages).[13] While a lot of reports consulted include analyses from before the pandemic, a March 2023 report from the assistant deputy minister (Review Services) underlines that a resource-mission mismatch remains an issue: "[a]lthough we do generally meet operational requirements, we may not always have the ability to do so concurrently as outlined in SSE [*Strong, Secure, Engaged*] and the FP&R [2018 Force Posture and Readiness Directive]."[14]

Another challenge is lack of expertise across projects, whether it is culture change, agile procurement, effective administration of OUTCAN programs, maintaining CF-18s or digital transformation.[15] Not only is it an issue of lack of adequate resources (are the knowledgeable

[11] For a list of reports consulted, see Appendix A.
[12] Allan D. English, "Corruption in the Canadian Military? Destroying Trust in the Chain of Command," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 23, no. 1, 2017: 35, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/11926422.2016.1250654?journalCode=rcfp20.
[13] Auditor General, "Report 3 – Canada's Fighter Force," 2018; DND, "Ready Forces Integrated Strategic Analysis"; DND/CAF Ombudsman, *Engaged in the World;* DND, "Audit of Information Management"; Ibid., "Evaluation of Acquisition Project Management"; Ibid., "Evaluation of Equipment Acquisition Program."
[14] Ibid., "Ready Forces Integrated Strategic Analysis," 1; Ibid., "Audit of Information Management"; Allan English, "Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault in the Canadian Armed Forces: Systemic Obstacles to Comprehensive Culture Change," Paper presented at the IUS Canada Conference, Ottawa, October 2016; Alexander Rudolph, "CAF Digital Campaign Plan: First Thoughts," *Canadian Cyber in Context*, March 27, 2023, https://canadiancyber.substack.com/p/caf-digital-campaign-plan-first-thoughts.; Ibid., "When Empty Promises are Literally Empty: Canadian Cyber-Defence Policy by Ad Hoc," Canadian Global Affairs Institute, July 2022, https://www.cgai.ca/when_empty_promises_are_literally_empty_canadian_cyber_defence_policy_by_ad_hoc.; Ian Mack, "Military Procurement Innovation Now," Canadian Global Affairs Institute, May 2022, https://www.cgai.ca/military_procurement_innovation_now.
[15] Douglas Dempster, "Capability Acquisition and Canadian Defence Policy: Program Achievability and Resilience?," in *Canadian Defence Policy in Theory and Practice*, Thomas Juneau, Philippe Lagassé and Srdjan Vucetic, eds., 341 (Cham: Palgrave McMillan, 2020).

personnel in the right postings or trained adequately?), but also one connected to the personnel management system.

Reinforced by the Posting Cycle …

Another significant barrier is the frequent rotation of CAF personnel. On average, service members change jobs every two to four years. Consequently, change initiatives are continuously disrupted as the individuals working on those files come in and out of the project at various times. As personnel arrive in their new role, a period of learning and adaptation takes place, thereby slowing progress.[16] This dynamic gets aggravated by the rewards and promotion systems, which encourage the completion of short-term goals based on that two- to four-year rotation of members.[17] An example for the consequences of this feature is Operation HONOUR publishing 12 various policies, directives and data that were often contradictory in the first 36 months of its existence.[18] Beyond change initiatives, the posting cycle also affects the delivery of ongoing activities, such as procurement and OUTCAN postings. An assistant deputy minister's (Review Services) report warns about a high turnover of cost analysts and their lack of inclusion in projects as a significant barrier to the effective and efficient acquisitions of various equipment for the CAF.[19] The DND/CAF ombudsman's study of the OUTCAN program also underlined that the posting cycle causes disruptions because most service members are unfamiliar with this program and how its processes work, and they are often not provided the proper training when they are posted in such a role.[20]

Changing the posting cycle would be a tremendous challenge and could go against what people expect from military life. In addition to exploring if such a change could be feasible and its impacts on how the CAF functions, a quantitative and qualitative study of what new and seasoned members want from military life would be useful to determine whether posting cycles can be lengthened and by how long in order to mitigate potential attrition. On top of changing performance indicators and rewarding actions that would support long-term objectives, addressing the information management system and onboarding procedures will be critical to mitigating the posting cycle's disruptive effects.

… And Aggravated By an Information Management System Not Fit-for-Purpose

Lack of data quality and access, as well as suboptimal communications channels, are problems that most reports examined for this study mentioned. Audits and evaluations found that data on sexual misconduct from the Canadian Forces' Strategic Response Team – Sexual Misconduct (which has been replaced with Chief Professional Conduct and Culture) and data on procurement projects, supply chains and equipment stocks, recruitment and retention and personnel posted outside of Canada have been either of low quality or not properly communicated to inform the

[16] English, "Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault," 5.
[17] Robert Engen, "When the Teeth Eat the Tail," Defense AI Observatory, February 2022, https://defenseai.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/DAIO_Study2309.pdf.
[18] English, "Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault," 2.
[19] DND, "Equipment Acquisition Program."
[20] DND/CAF Ombudsman, *Engaged in the World.*

progress of projects. Across the board, a lack of horizontal standardization of data across projects, teams and particularly L1s has greatly hindered project execution and progress across the CAF.[21] The CAF recognizes as much in its Operational Sustainment Modernization Strategy.[22] To fix the problem, proper definition of terms, objectives and key performance indicators will be critical as well, as they inform the type of data that are collected and used. Proper data collection is important to any project because it supports monitoring. Being able to detect unintended consequences of policies or practices (whether they are part of a change initiative or not) early on and address them quickly is particularly critical. It requires relevant and timely data gathered by an effective monitoring system. Not only does monitoring supported by good data help ensure that a project meets its objectives, it can also help minimize personnel frustration and enhance trust, as they see that the leadership is paying attention to their work.

Essentially, to complete the various change initiatives it is trying to pursue, the CAF needs to undertake a holistic culture change. This pre-change culture change, so to speak, would create the appropriate organizational and structural conditions for successful transformation efforts. And the task the CAF needs to prioritize above all else revolves around authority, responsibility and accountability (ARAs).

Align Your ARAs

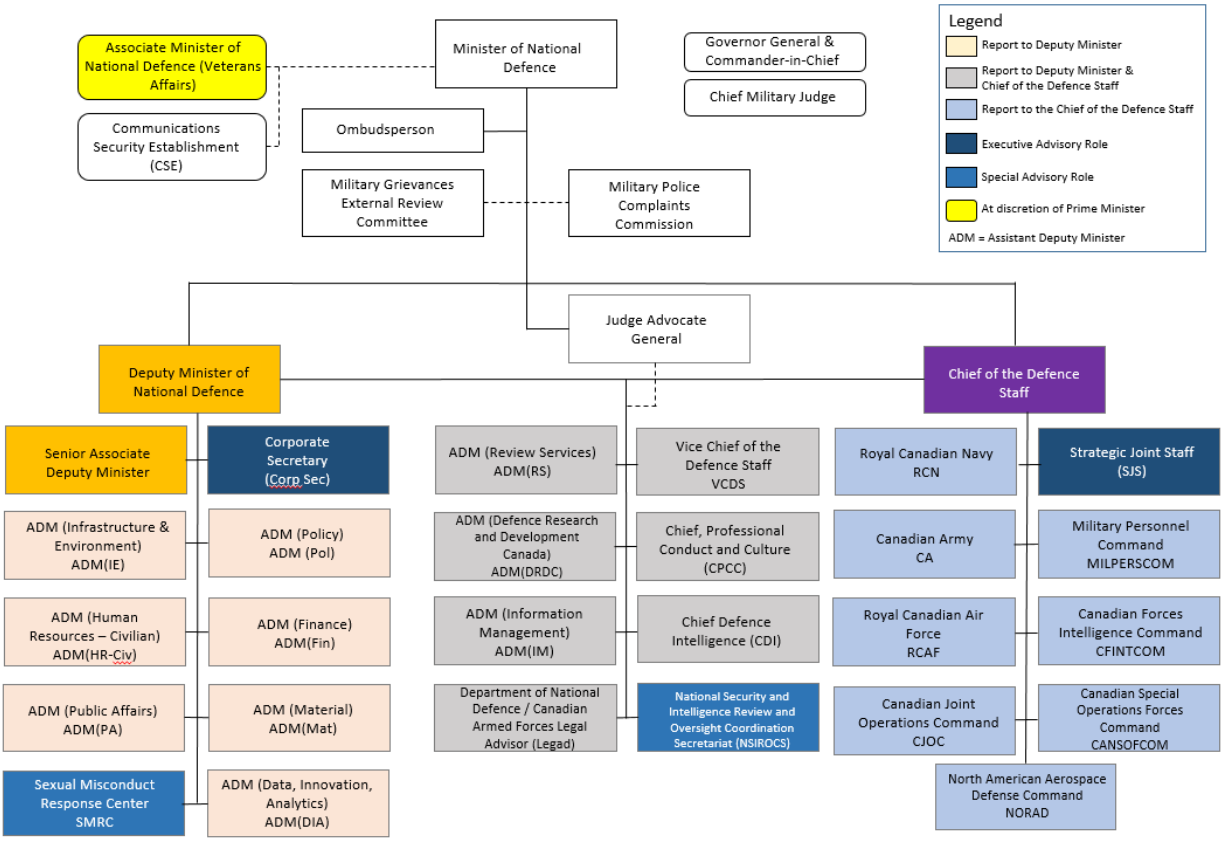
The issue of who has the authority and who is responsible and accountable for the different activities the CAF undertakes is implicit in many of the studied reports. When it comes to CAF-wide change, this question becomes as complex as the defence establishment's structure. A diarchical defence management apparatus split between the deputy minister and the chief of the defence staff, with L1s having complementary and overlapping authorities, and civilian and military L1s reporting to either the chief of the defence staff, the deputy minister or both, results in ambiguous chains of command at the strategic level (see Figure 1).[23]

We end up seeing that across strategies, campaign plans and directives, authorities and responsibilities are spread across the entire institution. This type of approach does not consider service members' existing tasks and priorities and allows multiple organizations to pile new tasks on top of "people's regular workloads."[24] The CAF's personnel shortage exacerbates this practice,

[21] DND, "Ready Forces Integrated Strategic Analysis,"; Ibid., "Evaluation of Acquisition Project Management,"; Auditor General, "Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour," 2018; Ibid., "Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment and Retention, 2016"; Ibid., "Royal Military College of Canada," 2017.
[22] DND, "Operational Sustainment Modernization Strategy," 2023, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/canadian-armed-forces-operational-sustainment-modernization-strategy.html.
[23] Alan Okros, "Civil-Military Relations: The Broader Context," *The Defence Team: Military and Civilian Partnership in the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence*, Irina Goldenberg et al., eds., (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2015), 50.
[24] Gwen Boniface, Jean-Guy Dagenais and Mobina S. B. Jaffer, "Military Slow to Address Sexual Harassment Problem: Senators Boniface, Dagenais and Jaffer," Senate of Canada, June 3, 2019, https://sencanada.ca/en/sencaplus/opinion/military-slow-to-address-sexual-harassment-problem-senators-boniface-dagenais-and-jaffer/.

further contributing to the resource-mission mismatch it is experiencing. Strategies and campaign plans also tend not to include a clear breakdown of tasks, guidelines and the associated expectations commensurate with a member's rank and position. Also, methods of accountability tend to be absent. When change becomes the responsibility of all, who is held accountable?

Figure 1: Organizational Chart – Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces[25]



Worsening this issue is the CAF's ambiguous conceptualization of its ARA relationships based on the co-existence of separate L1s whose cultures do not overlap. In Robert Engen's words, the L1s structure tends to be "balkanized."[26] Even though L1s have their own data and information management standards, and have a lot of discretion in their personnel management systems, their

[25] DND, Ministerial Transition Material 2021, DND/CAF Organizational Chart, last modified February 23, 2023. Accessed August 27, 2023, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/transition-materials/mnd-transition-material-2021-dnd/tab6-dnd-caf-org-chart.html. Note that this chart is the most recent one publicly available, although the page mentioned that it is "a historical record which was valid when published but may now contain information which is out of date."
[26] Engen, "When the Teeth Eat the Tail."

succession planning and their procurement process, they have to work with the vice-chief of the defence staff, the Chief Military Personnel, the assistant deputy ministers of Materiel and Finances and many others to advance their work. This approach also overlooks regulations that apply to all service members, as outlined in the Defence Administration Orders and Directives, Queen's Regulations and Orders, the *National Defence Act*, and those laid out by Treasury Board and legislation (e.g., the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Employment Equity Act*). In fact, during their participation in the Canadian Global Affairs Institute's webinars on reconstitution and culture change, Vice-Adm. Angus Topshee, Lieut.-Gen. Jocelyn Paul, Lieut.-Gen. Eric Kenny and Lieut.-Gen. Jennie Carignan all mentioned that they had limited authority in personnel management and culture issues. Similarly, the Operation Sustainment Modernization Strategy recognizes fragmented ARAs as an issue, and one of its objectives is to align them "to achieve unity of purpose, automation, and modernization." The Reconstitution Directive also deliberately underlines points of co-ordination between and across certain L1s (mainly Chief Military Personnel and the assistant deputy ministers of Finance and Public Affairs). However, the challenge of split ARAs remains salient.

Acknowledging that the CAF is a mosaic of subcultures should not lead to denying the existence of a common culture and structure. Otherwise, documents such as *Trusted to Serve* and *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations* would not be valid as they assume a CAF-wide identity and structure. This is not to refute the existence of subcultures, either. Undeniably, the culture on a Canadian ship sailing in the Indo-Pacific will be different from 2 Royal Canadian Regiment's at Canadian Forces Base Petawawa. But L1s have the responsibility to pursue change, as outlined in *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations*. It goes to the principle of "leading the institution," as opposed to "leading people."[27] To better align ARAs and consequently create accountability at the highest levels for change initiatives, it's critical to go back to the roots of what leading the institution means for L1s.

Conceptual Foundations defines leading the institution as "ensuring *congruence among the working parts of a system of across the whole of the CF* [Canadian Forces]" (emphasis in the original). It requires the adoption of a "systems perspective and *systems thinking,*" and the recognition of the "profound interconnectedness of things and the need to consider how the discrete parts of a system both interact with and affect the whole."[28] The current structure of balkanized L1s and the approaches outlined in strategies, campaign plans and directives stand in contrast to those principles.

For example, the 2022 Reconstitution Directive outlines tasks across 13 L1s, Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (CANSOFCOM) and the Strategic Joint Staff. Similarly, the CAF's Digital Campaign Plan mentions five lines of efforts, each of which contains three objectives, that all L1s ought to implement without naming who is responsible for what task. But neither document outlines which entities have the proper authority and responsibility to lead the change,

[27] DND, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations*, (Ottawa: Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2005), https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/dn-nd/D2-313-2-2005-eng.pdf.
[28] Ibid., 105.

and therefore the one accountable if the CAF does not meet its objectives within the outlined timeline (if there is one). In contrast, the Operations Sustainment Modernization Strategy is upfront in its objectives to see system-of-systems thinking develop throughout the CAF. While there are limitations in terms of the distribution of efforts (responsibilities and tasks have yet to be clearly defined, especially when it comes to overlaps across L1), we see a movement towards embracing a more systemic approach to change.

The June 2023 draft of the CAF's Culture Evolution Strategy also shows some efforts towards clarifying responsibilities and a mention of horizontal co-ordination across L1s. Chief Professional Conduct and Culture establishes itself as the "principal advisor on professional culture … responsible for unifying, integrating, and coordinating all associated programs, policies, and activities across the DND and the CAF." Its responsibilities are to create and fine-tune culture standards, to act as a centre of expertise and a monitor and to measure outcomes. On the other hand, each L1 will have to create its own culture evolution plan, "[e]stablish baseline culture capabilities," "[c]ascade culture practice" and align "cross-cutting efforts." The rest of the strategy outlines the role of individuals, and especially those of both non-commissioned members and officers in changing the culture.[29] Although this strategy considers the cultural differences across L1s (especially air force, army and navy), it overlooks the critical roles that certain L1s, such as Chief Military Personnel and the Judge Advocate general play in the pursuit of culture change. Finally, there is no line of accountability should the leaders involved fail to implement the necessary efforts, or should the efforts pursued not bear the expected results.

It also seems that the Digital Campaign Plan, the Operations Sustainment Modernization Strategy and the draft Culture Evolution Strategy overlook competing and concurrent priorities. Although the Reconstitution Directive underlines that L1s should take their current personnel situation into account when doing their work, none of the strategies and campaign plans examined for this piece mentions the current state of affairs. Mentions of resources include vague language about proper funding within the limits of what central agencies and ADM (Finance) approve, timelines are mostly absent and the documents seem to be agnostic of concurrent challenges, e.g., personnel shortages related to lower recruitment rates and higher rates of attrition. While pursuing those initiatives in parallel, if well done, could bring change to the CAF, more co-ordination and unification of strategies at the institutional level would help overcome the duplication of efforts. Not only could it help address serious systemic issues the military has been trying to overcome for several decades, but it could also lighten the load of an institution that is showing clear signs of overstretching.

What Now?

As the Department of National Defence works on implementing the $1 billion worth of budget cuts and on the Defence Policy Update, how the CAF works on its transformation efforts in terms of procurement, digital transformation, sustainment and restocking, conduct and broader

[29] DND, "Together – Stronger: Diversity of Service, Unity of Purpose," (Draft).

reconstitution-related challenges will determine its ability to adapt to the ever-changing and increasingly demanding threat environment.

The CAF will have to go through three central lines of efforts if it wants to succeed:

1. *Reform the Personnel Management System From the Top Down*

This change needs to start at the L1 and stream down the chain of command. First, the CAF needs to outline clear authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities in order to make any effort successful. This will also require centralizing certain efforts and requirements. For example, instead of centralizing digital transformation and information management in 2025, the CAF should get on with it now. Let ADM (CIO) and ADM (DTO) be the sole authorities and the responsible and accountable bodies for digital transformation and information management while they also co-ordinate across all L1s and then down the chain of command/hierarchy.

Similarly, for conduct-related culture change, CPCC should become responsible and accountable and adopt a project managerial role (as opposed to the current one of advisor, which suggests a more passive role). It should be the sole authority for the development of a culture change strategy for all the other L1s to execute. It then should make sure the other L1s are implementing initiatives in a way that is in line with the objectives, according to strict timelines and report directly to the chief of the defence staff, the deputy minister or even the minister of National Defence. CPCC could leverage work with the expertise of Chief Military Personnel's Directorate General Military Personnel Research and Analysis, as well as assistant deputy minister (Review Services) and the External Monitor to have accurate data and solid mechanisms for continuous monitoring.

From the top down, the CAF should also align its personnel evaluation system with postings requirements. Not only should the evaluated member display all the competencies and demonstrate that they have done the job well, but also the evaluation should be set up to ensure goals have been met within a given timeline and that continuity is ensured, especially when it comes to short-term postings in long-term projects. Chief Military Personnel should institutionalize this sort of evaluation in the PaCE forms. Also, no horizontal postings changes (i.e., new postings without promotion) should occur if short- to medium-term projects have not been completed or substantially advanced. For long-term projects, the member's contribution should be positive and have advanced the process. Given that frequent moves across Canada is one of the leading factors of attrition, this might create stability and improve retention. But mostly, it would improve accountability.

2. *Prioritize Information Management and Data Clarity*

The DND and the CAF have shown a limited ability to share accurate information across the institution, tasks and over time. Part of the issue is that there is no real standardized way to manage data, and when efforts and change are monitored, metrics evolve over time (and how they evolve is not tracked). If the defence team wants to excel, not only operationally, but also organizationally, how it manages information will be essential. Monitoring is a critical aspect of effective transformation and data is a key enabler. Policies often have unintended consequences

or face resistance and gathering both quantitative and qualitative information will be integral to get to the end goal better. For conduct-related issues, reviving (not without improvement) the Statistics Canada surveys conducted during Operation Honour would be a low-hanging fruit. Without proper information management, DND/CAF can only rely on perceptions of change, and not on critical data.

However, information management is not simply an enabler of change. The Pan-Domain Force Employment Concept highlights the need for all aspects of DND/CAF to work seamlessly, but also in concert with the larger federal government and its allies.[30] Suboptimal data gathering and information management will severely impede threat detection and deterrence across all domains. In this information age, it is critical for the CAF to adequately execute its tasks, whether they are institutional or operational. To change how the defence team manages its information, it needs to get rid of the L1-centric approach to data storage, standardizing information, how to store and share it across the institution (and thereby getting rid of the silos in standards and practices), as well as getting rid of the parallel systems of storage and sharing. The Digitization Campaign Plan and the work of the assistant deputy ministers (digital transformation officer and chief information officer) show the department and the CAF's intent on moving forward on this. However, timelines should be accelerated (which the ADM (chief information officer) recognized at a CGAI event in October 2023). Also, members' digital literacy and trust in the cloud storage system urgently need to be developed if the institution wants to transform while detecting and deterring threats across domains and theatres.

3. Develop a Detailed Strategic Plan that Takes a System-of-Systems View of the CAF

The CAF requires clear lines of efforts, clear accountabilities and clear timelines to effectively pursue its transformation. It is also necessary to make sure the CAF effectively modernizes itself to understand how all efforts reinforce each other. Digitization and information management will help gathering and sharing of data that are accurate and helpful for the project and will enable monitoring and lessons learning. Prioritizing efforts will require adapting job/posting expectations and influence the way the personnel management system functions in the shorter term.

Prioritizing lines of efforts and treating transformation as a CAF-wide effort (with different levels of accountabilities depending on one's role in the initiative) will also allow for a rethinking of what labour the CAF values and how (going back to reforming the personnel management system). The CAF will have to avoid the pitfall of benefiting one skill set over others, as it has in the past, and embrace diversity of perspectives to tackle complex issues.

Tackling those hurdles to systemic change means setting the stage for a culture change structure and plan that will improve procurement practices, preparing for digital transformation,

[30] The Department and the military have yet to make this document public, but the author obtained a copy. It is an unclassified publication.

supporting the reconstitution effort, improving services and support for members and mitigating sexual misconduct and discrimination. It is about preparing the right conditions for change.

The adage "culture eats strategy for breakfast" is often repeated. This quote, often misattributed to Peter Drucker, can be interpreted as a warning to an organization's highest levels that they must work to create the conditions for proper implementation – an interpretation Michel Bastarache adopted in his review of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's implementation of the Merlo Davidson Settlement Agreement.[31] Developing a strategy that aligns the performance evaluation system, authorities, responsibilities, accountabilities and data gathering in ways that support the transformation initiative is necessary to avoid such a fate.

The military faces manifold challenges. But if the CAF wants to be successful in present and future operations, it needs to set up its organization in a way that is not only fit-for-purpose, but also ensures its members' well-being. We have seen that the system is not set up for success across long-term initiatives. In a personnel shortage, reckoning over discrimination and interpersonal violence within the ranks, the ever-accelerating pace of technological change and the complexifying threat environment, the CAF cannot afford to view its systemic issues as isolated. It must address them with the comprehensive culture change they require.

[31] Michel Bastarache, "Broken Dreams, Broken Lives: The Devastating Effects of Sexual Harassment On Women in the RCMP," 2020: 54, https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/wam/media/4773/original/8032a32ad5dd014db5b135ce3753934d.pdf.

Appendix A: List of Reports Studied

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About the Author

Charlotte Duval-Lantoine *is the Ottawa operations manager and a fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute. She completed a master's in military history at Queen's University, during which she started researching the toxic culture of leadership in the Canadian Armed Forces during the 1990s and its impact on gender integration, which had begun in 1989. She continues to study leadership and culture change issues in the military in her free time. She obtained her BA in history and political science at McGill University in 2017.*

Charlotte is author of The Ones We Let Down: Toxic Leadership Culture and Gender Integration in the Canadian Forces, in which looks at failed efforts to achieve gender integration "in full" during the 1990s. She reveals an organization unwilling and unable to change, and attitudes held by military leaders that fed a destructive dynamic and cost lives.

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