

CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE
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Rebuilding the Reserve Force

by C.P. Champion

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POLICY PERSPECTIVE

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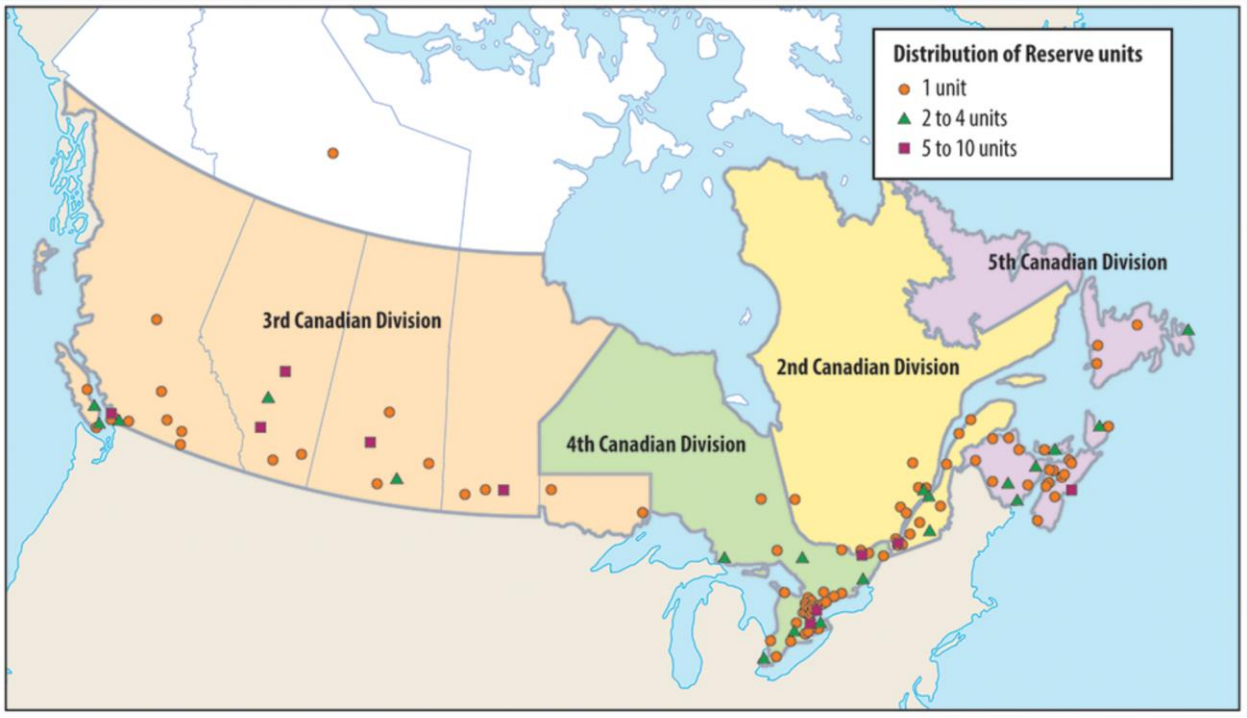
Canada's political and even military leaders take an exceptionally narrow approach to the reserves. The map below reveals that CAF primary reserve units remain an extraordinary network of army, navy, air, intelligence and medical units nested in cities and towns all across the country. They are available on short notice to deal with security problems or natural disasters and are a crucial supplement to our drastically under-strength regular force. And yet our political leaders, our cultural and thought leaders and even our military leaders consistently overlook the reserves' importance and the need to ensure their vitality.

Even regular force members are generally surprised and baffled by the reserve force's reach and its proximity to the public and local communities. Regular members tend to reside on a few bases isolated from major urban centres, and in their heavily bureaucratized, top-heavy headquarters in Ottawa. And while Canada's reserve forces have enormous untapped potential to benefit both the military and civil society in a much bigger way, Canada's political class in all parties makes little effort to address public ignorance. Or even their own, as neither civil nor military leaders seem aware of the latent potential of the extant reserve system to redouble Canada's contribution to alliance deterrence and war-fighting capacity in the new era of global power threats. They can also assist society in rebuilding social capital and societal resilience and give young people opportunities to build character and earn income while serving in their local communities.



(Source: Report of the Auditor-General of Canada, Report 5, 2016, Exhibit 5.1)

How Bad Is It?

The reserve force is a truly nation-building institution. It provides a venue for citizenship formation, youth employment and executive and managerial training. It also offers the opportunity for students to earn tuition (and avoid debt), with participation on both sides of the English-French divide, greater ethnocultural diversity than the regular force, higher levels of education in the ranks and a shared tradition that includes, as one Senate report lamented, a "legacy of neglect."[1] In the current structure, 97 per cent of Canada's population "lives within a 45-minute drive" of a reserve unit,[2] yet 82 per cent of Canadians, especially the young, are "unfamiliar" with what they do or have "not heard anything" about them.[3] When former Defence and Foreign Affairs minister Bill Graham died on August 7 of this year, obituaries mentioned his service in the reserves,[4] which was a common feature in political and economic leaders' biographies decades ago. But who knew Graham had served? How many MPs today have done it? How many MPs take an active interest in their local reserve units and their recruiting efforts? Some do. But it is a fraction of what is needed. There is an urgent requirement in Canada to have a bold national reserve strategy developed alongside a military strategy that reinforces deterrence.

Unfortunately, Canada's senior political and military leadership shows little awareness of recent thinking on deterrence, preparedness and resilience. Defence scholars have written for several years about the links between societal resilience and deterrence rooted in war-fighting capacity, including cyber-deterrence.[5] The University of Waterloo's Alexander Lanoszka describes societal resilience as the ability to "carry on the fight" after regular forces are engaged,[6] relying on a well-prepared, well-informed civil society, including robust reserves. That applies not only to Central European and other frontline NATO countries but to Canada itself, not least to strengthen its neglected military and fragile civil society. With a gruelling conventional war in Ukraine and ominous flashpoints elsewhere, it is past time for our leaders to get caught up.

Think Small

An important short-term consideration is that budget decisions that treat even the regular forces as unimportant have encouraged CAF leaders to think small in all areas, including the reserves. I have documented the absence of vision and policy since 1995 in detail in my 2019 book, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve*.[7]

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[1] Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, *Wounded: Canada's Military and the Legacy of Neglect*, Interim Report, September 2005.
[2] *Strong Secure Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, 2017, 67.
[3] Murray Brewster, "Military is Off the Radar of Most Canadians: DND Poll," CBC, July 20, 2018, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/dnd-canadians-military-poll-1.4754083.
[4] See for instance John Ibbitson, "Bill Graham, a Political Rarity, Was a Beacon of Civility in Federal Government," *Globe and Mail*, August 14, 2022, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-bill-graham-a-political-rarity-was-a-beacon-of-civility-in-federal/.
[5] David Lonsdale, "Warfighting for Cyber Deterrence: a Strategic and Moral Imperative," *Philosophy and Technology* 31:3, 2018, 409-429.
[6] Alexander Lanoszka, "From Ottawa to Riga: Three Tensions in Canadian Defence Policy," *International Journal 2017*, vol. 72(4), 536.
[7] C. P. Champion, *Relentless Struggle: Saving the Army Reserve 1995-2019*, (Durnovaria, 2019).

Although Col Howard Coombs has argued in the *Canadian Military Journal* that the new "integrated" reserve is "supportable and sustainable,"[8] in practice the reserve is still exploited as an employment pool to cover the CAF's inability to sustain its own requirements, given short-sighted politicians' funding decisions. Instead, the regulars find themselves compelled to drain thousands of trained junior leaders and privates away from reserve units and to pay them from the class A training budget to fill regular force class B positions. They are turning to the reserves again now to get enough troops for Latvia rotations. But this is the same short-term thinking as in the past. The regular force must instead find a way to force-generate to fulfil its own tasks without cannibalizing the reserves.

It is a mantra that Canada's reserves are "fully integrated into the … chain of command."[9] The primary reserve (PRes), we are told, has "evolved" from "mobilization or augmentation" to "integration."[10] Canada needs "an integrated and agile Reserve Force" that is defined, in a catchphrase in the 2017 policy consistent with the NATO bureaucracy,[11] as "achieving 'full-time capability through part-time service.'"[12] But these euphemisms are precisely what you get when, in fact, an organization is devouring the seed corn.

Full-time capability is the proper business of the regular force, the salaried employees of the forces in being. By contrast, almost all reservists serve part-time; they are civilians with full-time studies or a life and career apart from the military. If they do provide full-time capability, it is only by accepting full-time contracts, hollowing out scarce reserve leaders without really meeting the regular force's requirement for full-time career soldiers. The *National Defence Act* s. 15(3) describes reservists as "members who are enrolled for other than continuing, full-time military service."[13] The act does not even provide for full-time reservists who are "not on active service."

A related cultural problem is that few regular force members join the reserve force upon retirement. "Regular Force individuals who have not reached compulsory retirement age are not required – and sometimes not even encouraged" to do so.[14] On the contrary, to obtain educational benefits upon retiring, a regular member must completely release from the CAF. But that is totally counterproductive. There is no reason why educational benefits for CAF members should not be tied to resuming part-time service in a local unit while studying. That would reduce attrition, incentivize continuing service, bring experienced personnel to reserve units and help the individual adjust to civilian life with a part-time income.

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[8] Howard Coombs, "Letter to the Editor," *Canadian Military Journal*, vol. 20, no. 3, Summer 2020, 4, http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol20/no3/PDF/CMJ203E.pdf.
[9] Auditor General of Canada, Report 5, Canadian Army Reserve, National Defence, 2018, https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201602_05_e_41249.html.
[10] Coombs, "Letter to the Editor," p. 4
[11] Jeroen H. Saat, "Lessons Learned from Commitments of Reservists in Operations (LLCRO)," National Reserve Forces Committee, Report, Ministry of Defence, The Netherlands, June 2016, 27.
[12] Shawn D. Bindon and Howard Coombs, "Serving the Nation's Interests: Creating an Integrated and Agile Canadian Reserve Force," *Canadian Military Journal*, vol. 21, no. 4, Autumn 2021, 2. http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/PDFs/CMJ214Ep5.pdf.
[13] "The only time consent for full-time service is not required is through an order signed by the Governor General acting on the advice of Cabinet." — Auditor General, 2016, Report 5, https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201602_05_e_41249.html#ex1.
[14] Wolfgang Riedel, "The Canadian Army Needs a Paradigm Shift," *Canadian Military Journal*, vol. 20, no. 2, Spring 2020, 28.

Not Miniature Regulars

True reservists, as the auditor general wrote, are "part-time members [who] must balance the demands of their military activities with their civilian lives." They serve one night a week, a few weekends, plus summer courses. The problem with the "integrated and agile" buzzword is that it translates into trying to make reservists more like regulars – in fact, miniature regulars who mimic the "real" soldiers, or who make it their goal in life to become a regular.

There is no doubt that Canada needs stronger, fully funded regular forces. A minority of Canadians is interested in serving in the military and the nation is, or should be, very grateful that they exist and far more supportive than it is. Whatever institutional obstacles prevent the regulars from successfully force-generating their own troops should be removed. But for the majority of Canadians who might be interested in putting on the uniform, the part-time reserve life is better and healthier, and the nation should be far more grateful and supportive of them as well.

That consideration brings us to the purpose of reserves: A reserve force is maintained in reserve; it comes into action later and less rapidly than the presumably better-prepared front-line forces. A reserve's purpose is to provide strategic depth, staying power and sustainment in an emergency.[15] That is true of those regular forces held in reserve during a military operation. But it is also true of a reserve force in the overall military structure and in strategic planning.

A well-prepared reserve may be almost as ready as regulars, given work-up training prior to deployment. But U.S. thought leaders have rediscovered the need to return to the roots of the reserve concept, to stop using reserves as operational reserve forces and begin valuing them, as Maj.-Gen. Lewis G. Irwin has written, as the "strategic reserves they were originally intended to be."[16] Canadians too must rediscover what it means to uphold the part-time reserve forces as a strategic asset – not an integrated temp agency continually enfeebled by the regular force.

As one senior NDHQ officer puts it:

> A reserve is kept in reserve. What we do [in Canada], instead, is we keep committing the reserve and failing to reconstitute it. The demands keep increasing on the Regulars but they are too small. So all they [the CAF] want from the PRes [the primary reserve, that is to say, the main reserve forces that train throughout the year] is to get people on full-time service without sustaining the Force. The Regular Force needs to be the right size, and force generate the capability they need without draining the Reserve Force.[17]

Defence scholars who study societal resilience attribute to the strategic reserves a key role in a country's ability to go on, to "carry on the fight."[18] NATO itself describes resilience as "the ability of a nation to resist and recover from a major shock, such as a natural disaster or an armed attack.

[15] E.g., in NDHQ Policy Directive P26, January 11, 1978.
[16] Lewis G. Irwin, "A Modern Army Reserve for a Multi-Domain World: Structural Realities and Untapped Potential," Monograph, U.S. Army War College Press, 2019, 29, https://press.armywarcollege.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1371&context=monographs.
[17] Interview with a senior NDHQ officer, July 2022.
[18] Lanoszka, 536.

Robust resilience and civil preparedness … are essential to NATO's collective security and defence."[19] That rhetoric is commonplace, even trendy. But NATO members clearly failed to implement it sufficiently – and Moscow noticed. And so everyone is now asking themselves: what is left of our reserve forces?

Resilience

Deterrence continues after the outbreak of war. Resilience, writes Carleton University's Alex Wilner, "is the ability to bounce back, to mitigate the effects of an attack, to recover quickly after getting hit. … Resilience is primarily about recovery, but from a deterrence standpoint it also robs would-be aggressors of their objectives and strategic success." In Canada, such deterrent effects could be accomplished with large, well-trained and well-equipped reserves – necessarily under a national military strategy and emergency response (or mobilization) plan. Far from being a thing of the past, as think-small advocates maintain,[20] a mobilization strategy is existential for a serious government.[21] (It might seem obvious but bears repeating that our government also needs to take the regular forces far more seriously and provide them with far greater resources for many reasons, beyond the important one of reducing their tendency to make inappropriate and unsustainable demands on the reserves).

It is noteworthy that resilience to carry on the fight applies directly to the tragedy unfolding in Ukraine. A slow-grinding Russian advance has forced Ukraine to dig deeper for resilience in order to hold and regain ground, building strategic depth and rebuilding reserves by serving conscription papers to men in church and on the beach.[22] How much easier it would be for Ukraine in this terrible crisis to train a sufficient number of civilians up to proper combat standards to carry on the fight today, if more men had already received part-time training with an eye to having in place true military reserves and serious societal resilience. It is a hard lesson and should have been easily anticipated.

[19] NATO Secretary General's Annual Report, 2018, 19.
[20] David Pratt, "Canada's Citizen Soldiers: A Discussion Paper," Canadian International Council and Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, 2011, 4-5, https://dpa.ltd/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Canadas_Citizen_Soldiers_-_Abridged.pdf. Pratt argues that mobilization must be "abandoned" to bring reserve roles "into the 21st century." Alas, this was short-term thinking based on the false assumption that all future conflicts would resemble Afghanistan. For an airily dismissive NDHQ, see above pp. 46-52. Notably wiser was defence expert Richard Cohen, who served in the British and Canadian armies: "Our defence policy is predicated on the kind of asymmetric warfare we have faced since the end of the Cold War and it really ignores the looming strategic threats that Russia, China and maybe some others pose as well," he said in 2018. See Murray Brewster, "Why the U.S. Could Lose the Next Big War - and What That Means for Canada," CBC, November 18, 2018, https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/defence-policy-trump-china-russia-1.4910038.
[21] J. L. Granatstein and Charles Belzile "The Special Commission on the Restructuring of the Reserves, 1995, Ten Years Later," 2005, 36, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cdfai/pages/41/attachments/original/1413661138/Restructuring_The_Reserves_-_English.pdf?1413661138. The requirement for mobilization plans cannot go out of date because it is always necessary for a serious country to have up-to-date worst-case scenario contingency plans and surge capacity that maximizes the potential for society to survive a crisis with the least possible disruption and casualties.
[22] Ian Birrell and Kate Baklitskaya, "Conscripts Are Being Given Call-up Papers on the Beaches of Ukraine as Volodymyr Zelensky's Army Suffers Heavy Losses," *Daily Mail*, July 9, 2022, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10998887/Conscripts-given-call-papers-beaches-Ukraine.html.

What the Reserves Need

The latent potential for Canadian deterrence-as-resilience exists, untapped, in our existing reserve network. Trained and skilled civilians on a stronger footing in their local community would require significantly better-supported units. Fortunately, much of the infrastructure remains despite a long history of cuts based on short-term thinking. There are still 185 army reserve units in 86 communities; 24 naval reserve divisions; 16 field ambulances, plus special forces and JAG reserve elements, cadet instructors and 190 Ranger patrols made up mostly of Indigenous youth.

However, as the auditor general noted, those "units do not have the number of soldiers they need to train so that soldiers and teams are prepared to deploy when required." A dysfunctional recruiting system makes it difficult for the reserve "to recruit and retain the soldiers it needs." The units, the auditor general said, "did not have the funding they needed to fully support all required unit activities" and "had difficulty retaining their trained soldiers."[23] The CAF had no fast track to get skilled civilians into uniform in positions that exploit their skill set such as cyber, linguistic or interpersonal skills,[24] with flexible training opportunities to ensure military cultural and fitness standards remain high or higher.

Experience shows that the reserve force flourishes and grows when it is allowed to recruit, train and retain with the incentive of good activity and regular force support as illustrated in the StAR program (Strengthening the Army Reserve) from 2017 to 2020. StAR emerged from a desire to arrest the army reserve's decline to 13,944 trained members by 2015.[25] Implemented by then-army commander Lt.-Gen. Paul Wynnyk,[26] StAR resulted in 7,247 soldiers signing up for full-time summer employment (FTSE) in 2018, an 88 per cent uptake. It was a banner year. The army recruited 4,226 new reservists in 2019 compared to the previous five-year average of 2,509.[27] Since a stingy NDHQ funded only 900 new positions per year (an average of five soldiers per unit), trained strength grew slowly, but was approaching 15,000 by the start of 2020.[28]

Thus before COVID-19 restrictions, aggravated by federal emergency benefits such as CERB and CESB, broke the program's momentum, StAR was proof that youth of all socioeconomic backgrounds will sign up for a well-paid part-time job that, over a two- to four-year term of study, would enable them to complete their education or trades qualification debt-free. Good military training builds initiative, character, teamwork, responsibility and connectedness, and thus multiplies social capital with short- and long-term benefits to society as a whole. Such was the promise of StAR until CAF recruiting was suspended for two years and, unwisely, little effort was made to creatively continue force-generating.

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[23] Ibid.
[24] Sandy White, "Opinion: A Wake-up Call for Canada's Military Reserves Strategy," *Montreal Gazette*, March 8, 2022, https://montrealgazette.com/opinion/opinion-a-wake-up-call-for-canadas-military-reserves-strategy.
[25] "Strengthening the Army Reserve," Memorandum to Cabinet, 2015.
[26] CDS and VCDS directives, cited in *Relentless Struggle*. Chapter XXII.
[27] Ibid., 440.
[28] Reserves 2000 update to its members, December 14, 2018.

Official figures in 2022 show 68,000 regular and 27,000 reserve members,[29] with effective strength across the primary reserve closer to 25,000.[30] In reality, the CAF is short by thousands of members and, critically, junior leaders. In the PRes alone, only 2,248 out of 5,096 established sergeant positions are filled and only 2,817 out of 7,005 master corporal positions.[31] This is a major crisis.

The dearth of leadership sends a devastating message to an enemy. Our allies are vulnerable while we and others in NATO are less able to help them. The roots of the crisis can be traced back to Afghanistan, where reservists comprised 15 per cent to 25 per cent of contingents.[32] As Lt.-Gen. Andrew Leslie, a former Canadian army commander, said: "The Army could not have done what it did in Afghanistan without the Reserve. We would have crashed and burned. The country owes them a huge debt of gratitude."[33] To the extent that that is true, it was accomplished while neglecting to sustain the reserves. As one senior officer put it, "We spent all our time feeding the monster and there was no forward strategic thinking to build a sustainable Force afterwards."[34] In other words, CAF's leaders focused so much on a single operation that they missed a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fund, build, recruit and equip a better CAF based on combat experience, lessons learned and massive public support.

There is no indication that StAR will be revived, and FTSE is under-supported and flagging. Instead, NDHQ will try to use compulsion. Participation in training would be an order, with enforcement measures and potential punishments: summary fines and conviction under s. 293 of the act, says an officer involved in reserve planning: "It is well within the bounds of current legislation that reservists will be 'ordered to train' and obliged to seek authority to be excused."[35] Unfortunately, this approach forgets that reservists are first and foremost volunteers for whom the motto that "floggings will continue until morale improves" is even less appropriate than for the regular forces.

What the Nation Needs

The proper way to motivate volunteers is to value short-term service and make the reserve experience valuable.[36] And here we should look up from the battle maps and think of the

[29] David Pugliese, "Military to Look at Cutting Capabilities, Using Public Servants to Handle More Jobs, Says Directive From Top General and Deputy Minister," *Ottawa Citizen*, June 28, 2022, https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/military-to-look-at-cutting-capabilities-to-save-money-says-directive-from-top-general-and-deputy-minister.
[30] According to Monitor Mass, a Military Command Software Centre (MCSC) personnel tracking system used by DND.
[31] DND source.
[32] Riedel, 24.
[33] Chris Edwards, "Canadian Reserves In Afghanistan: An Expanding Legacy," NATO Association of Canada, June 14, 2013, https://natoassociation.ca/canadian-reserves-in-afghanistan-an-expanding-legacy/.; Robert Unger, "How Much are Primary Reservists Worth?" *Canadian Military Journal*, Autumn 2011, vol. 11, no 4, 61-63.
[34] Quoted in *Relentless Struggle*. pp. 367, 377
[35] DND source; Kevin MacLean, "Harnessing the Potential of Canada's Reserve Force Utilizing the Current Provisions of the NDA and QR&O," Canadian Forces College, 10, https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/402/305/maclean.pdf.; Riedel, 28.
[36] Ernest Beno and Eppo van Weelderen, "Army reserve soldiers are generally well educated, and this must be considered when designing training; it must be challenging and rewarding in order to facilitate retention of personnel," *Training for War: Collective Training in Canada's Reserve Units*, 2017, 10, http://rca-arc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Training-for-War-Collective-Training-in-Canadas-Reserve-Units-Final.pdf.

extraordinary social benefits that Canada receives, as do other nations, from reservists' service to the community and their personal and career growth in the process.

Regulars find it hard to understand that in a reserve unit, the individual member is a civilian with competing demands on his time. He or she makes a personal decision for each training night or weekend as to whether it will be a good go or a lower priority diversion from studies, family, leisure and work time, given what they can expect to earn and learn.[37] If it looks as if the activity is going to be poorly planned, repetitive or standing by to stand by, the individual chooses to stay away. It is all too easy to castigate ungrateful millennials but applying compulsion will surely backfire in higher attrition.

Since volunteers vote with their feet, the burden properly falls on leadership (a) to incentivize participation and (b) to follow up with mentoring and leadership. And that leadership goes right up through the brass hats to the politicians because the reserves need more brigade-level and regular force support. The latter is currently inadequate partly because regulars and class B reservists see weekends and summers as time off, whereas class A reservists see weekends and summers as prime training time, and partly because every part of our military establishment is drastically underfunded.

Human Connections

The stakes are high for all Canadians because the issue of the reserves goes well beyond their direct military and emergency response role that would justify greater attention. Sebastian Junger's influential book, *Tribe*, describes the human need for social connectedness in the global era. This analysis has taken on new relevance given post-COVID uncertainty, isolation and the effects of social media and lockdowns. Many children and youth have been greatly harmed by government and adult panic, which, not surprisingly, created a "mental health emergency" for kids.[38] That is adumbrated by social media, which has itself been harmful to a generation of children whose parents allow access, another factor in undermining resilience.[39] We have a generation of young people who need badly to reconnect with real people and get a sense of belonging. That must begin face to face in nurturing families, schools, sports clubs, volunteer activities, churches, cadet corps and Canada's nation-building reserve network.

On a wider scale, to survive and overcome polarization, civil society needs not only diversity but shared customs and traditions: social, economic and cultural interactions. Citizens need personal networks to build trust and relate to the wider community. They need the dose of reality of hands-on, shared experiences. The military's customs and traditions are time-tested and work well in the comparatively ethnically diverse reserve force. Scholarly research shows that, at their best,

[37] MacLean, 4.
[38] Ted Raymond, "CHEO Joins Other Children's Hospitals in Declaring Mental Health Crisis among Youth as Pandemic Drags On," CTV, May 19, 2021, https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/cheo-joins-other-children-s-hospitals-in-declaring-mental-health-crisis-among-youth-as-pandemic-drags-on-1.5433469.
[39] Elia Abi-Jaoude, Karline Treurnicht Naylor and Antonio Pignatiello, "Smartphones, Social Media Use and Youth Mental Health" *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, February 10, 2020; 192(6): E136–E141, https://www.cmaj.ca/content/192/6/E136.

regiments with a healthy regimental spirit foster "potential for effective collective action" and "orient primary group bonds into organizationally approved channels," directing human energies and affections towards positive shared goals.[40] A larger reserve force can play a big role in rebuilding civil society, mending the cracks, strengthening social capital and restoring attachment by offering shared, in-person, pan-Canadian experiences.

Canada's reserve system, and particularly its 185 army reserve regiments residing right within Canadian communities across the country, offer a unique opportunity to build interconnectedness, a sense of belonging, service and mutual responsibility. The combined civilian-military culture of reserve units can and does uniquely transcend the class, gender, ideological and ethnic lines that increasingly divide us. A national reserve strategy would serve more than mere military utility: it would repair and generate social capital. In turn, these would bolster Canada's military and emergency preparedness via enhanced deterrence as societal resilience.

Who Owns the Reserves?

A prominent root of the problem is that the regular force thinks it owns the reserve force, "a strategic and operational resource for Canada and the CAF."[41] Thus in total in 2014-15, the regular force helped itself to 45 per cent of the reserve force training budget to pay contractors filling gaps in the regular force. As a senior NDHQ officer admitted in 2019, the class A training budget was "a little bit of a purse to solve regular force financial management challenges,"[42]; in other words, a slush fund.

The regulars should not own the reserves; rather, the Canadian people should. And to repeat, the regular force deserves our sympathy insofar as its limited resources force it to make improper demands on the reserves. But the solution is to make a stronger case for clear strategic vision and more defence spending that brings the regular force to full strength, and to do so as partners with a separate, unique and valuable reserve force. That cannot be accomplished by assuming that full-timers are the only real soldiers, sailors and airmen.

Here we should note that NDHQ's substantial Public Affairs directorate owns a monopoly on communications. But they perpetually miss the mark, especially here. Polls show that "awareness of and familiarity with the CAF" are "generally very low" and "virtually non-existent among those in the younger age group,"[43] which is necessarily the CAF's target audience. As few as 26 per cent

[40] A. Kellett, "Combat Motivation," ORAE Report No. R77, Ottawa: Department of National Defence, Operational Research and Analysis Establishment, 1980; Donna Winslow, "Misplaced Loyalties: The Role of Military Culture in the Breakdown of Discipline in Peace Operations," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 35: 3, August 1998; Ian Holloway, "Diversity at Any Cost: Canada's Defence Leaders Misunderstand the 'Problem' of Tradition," *The Dorchester Review*, Spring-Summer 2022, vol. 12, no. 1, https://www.dorchesterreview.ca/blogs/news/diversity-at-any-cost.
[41] Rob Roy MacKenzie and Howard G. Coombs, "Canadian Armed Forces: A New Vision for the Reserves," *Canadian Military Journal*, vol. 20, no. 3, Summer 2020, 7, http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/Vol20/No3/PDF/CMJ203Ep6.pdf.
[42] Author interview with Col. Pat Kelly, April 4, 2019, cited in *Relentless Struggle*, 429.
[43] Brewster.

of the public had "some awareness of what the military had been doing in the last year," only 42 per cent were "somewhat familiar" with the CAF and those polled were "hard-pressed to volunteer what roles" the CAF "plays domestically." A majority are "unfamiliar (66%) or somewhat unfamiliar (16%) with the local unit or units of the army reserve that are located in their very own community (astonishing), while just under 2 out of 10 are familiar (6%) or somewhat familiar (12%)." Indeed, "more than half of Canadians report they have not learned anything about the Army Reserve in the past year (58%)."

The Way Forward

The way forward organizationally is to reinforce and expand the reserves into a National Reserve Program that transcends exploitation by a CAF unable to force-generate due to underfunding. When asked, Canadians have expressed support for stronger reserves. The local armouries and stone frigates of the reserves have the most potential for interaction and recruitment among everyday Canadians. A reservist costs far less to train and maintain than a full-time member. A big reserve of 60,000 to 100,000 part-time members is the way to go.

Yes, Canada needs highly trained regular military members with particular skill sets. But it is the reserve force that supplies Canadians in every city, and many regions, in urban and rural areas, with the opportunity to gain exposure to the military by serving part-time and retaining their civilian aspirations at the same time. A young person can get an education, learn a trade, build a business and begin a professional and family life while serving in the reserves and earning money instead of accumulating debt. Available time varies with age and career track,[44] but the principle remains that talented civilians can do both, given CAF flexibility, mentoring and the promise of a career path, living up to the Churchillian mantra that a reservist is "twice the citizen."[45] Nor is it justified to cut or group units in smaller communities: Why should Canadian youth in cities have a chance to serve while youth in smaller and rural communities may not? Given the chance to help, Canadians will embrace, support and even fund their local units. The reserve force should belong to Canadians.

The way forward intellectually to bring the reserve force to its full potential is for the Canadian government to think of the reserves as a national program whose purpose includes, but transcends, military utility. Reserve service should be an avenue to permit volunteer citizens to undertake military training locally and part-time, and thus develop a large body of trained citizens with collective experience embedded in the civil society, which provides strategic depth, societal resilience and thus deterrent effects,[46] as well as the augmentation of military capacity on

[44] Dan Doran, "Attrition and Retention in the Reserves," *Canadian Military Journal*, Spring 2016, vol. 16, no. 2, 59-63.
[45] Dan Doran, "The PLQ Mod 6 Conundrum: How the CAF Punishes Reservists for Civilian Achievement," *Canadian Military Journal*, Autumn 2012, 75-78; Dan Doran, "Redefining the Army Reserve for the 21st Century," *Canadian Military Journal*, Spring 2013, 74-77.
[46] C. P. Champion, "Deterrence in Canada's Defence Policy," Sir William Otter Paper 1-21, Royal Canadian Military Institute and Queen's University, August 2021, https://www.rcmi.org/getmedia/704a38c0-ae02-4451-9bdc-7d4c51fba26a/Chris_Champion_Otter_Paper_1-21.aspx.

relatively short notice. Reserve units used to be a social and networking hub supporting their community and they should be again.

This approach will require a commitment to professional training and mentoring. A non-commissioned member training program (NCMTP) and reserve officer training program (ROTP), in which regular and reserve instructors are truly integrated under direction to train leaders, are a requirement. That means the federal government must properly fund, equip and support both the regular and reserve forces at full strength and, over time, with the best equipment. It is not only a necessity in military terms but is necessary for rebuilding Canada's ailing civil society and social capital at large.

An inspector general of reserves, similar to an auditor general, outside the chain of command, could hold the CAF to account with an annually tabled report to Parliament. The terms and conditions should require 10 years of class A service in one or more reserve units. Canada's military has an excellent culture when professionalism, education and the military ethos are upheld. But the record shows that the CAF handles the reserve force best when held accountable.[47]

The Way Forward Socially

The cultivation of public interest, engagement and support for the military is a vital requirement in a democracy. Some argue "the most fundamental question" is "what type of military do Canadians want?"[48] But that question is moot given how little Canadians know. Besides, the Canadian public has little say because the perpetuation of a small and unimaginative reserve force derives from the whim of an unimaginative and, at times, hostile NDHQ.[49]

The Russo-Ukrainian war, which began in 2014, has drawn in all sorts of NATO assistance including Canada's Op UNIFIER. As the conventional ground war plows on, the conflict may well get bigger before it is over. Alliance members including Canada must belatedly develop a high degree of war-fighting deterrence capability and long-term sustainability. Canada's leadership must seize the opportunity and think big regarding societal resilience, deterrence and strategic depth. We need a vision to create a national reserve strategy that unshackles the reserve tradition in Canada, within the CAF but also embracing the wider civil society, to bridge the civil-military gap and to meet the present danger.

We owe it to ourselves, and to them, to treat our longstanding, and long-neglected, reserve forces as a vital part of our military establishment as well as our civil society. Canada's future may depend on it.

[47] Champion, "The Minister's Monitoring Committee on the Reserves," *Relentless Struggle,* p. 250-1.
[48] Coombs, "Letter to the Editor," p. 4.
[49] *Relentless Struggle*. e.g. p. 223.

About the Author

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