

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE'S SECOND REPORT: *MODERNIZING RECRUITMENT IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES*

The Government of Canada (Government) welcomes the opportunity to respond to recommendations made in the second report of the Standing Committee on National Defence (NDDN). The Government would like to thank the Committee members for this report, as well as all the witnesses who appeared before the Committee.

The Government is pleased to note that the recommendations in the Committee's report are aligned with National Defence's current and planned efforts to address recruitment and retention shortcomings. Along with the need for culture change, increased diversity and improved services offered to Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members and their families, improving recruitment and retention is imperative to ensure the CAF has the resources and personnel it requires to adequately fulfill the missions it is assigned.

The Government welcomes the recommendations in the report.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS ON CULTURE CHANGE

Recommendation #1: *That the Government of Canada take decisive steps to transform the institutional culture within the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure an inclusive, safe and respectful workplace for all Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence personnel. To this end, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces should develop measurable actions designed to hold senior leaders accountable for implementing sustained culture change. In consultation with external experts, performance metrics— including a 360-degree performance review process—should be established for senior leaders.*

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

The CAF is committed to creating a healthy, diverse, and inclusive workplace so that all members feel safe, protected, and respected. As such, in 2021, the CAF established a new organization, the Chief Professional Conduct and Culture, in order to rapidly define the scope of work and priorities, and develop a detailed plan for National Defence's efforts related to culture change and professional conduct with the core values and ethical principles expected of the profession of arms and the Defence Team.

In addition, Budget 2022 allocated \$31.6 million in ongoing funding to CAF health services and physical fitness programs to enable them to be more responsive to women and gender-diverse military personnel. Budget 2022 also allocated funding to a collection of initiatives to build a healthy, inclusive, and safe workplace, free from discrimination, harassment, and violence. These initiatives are spread across four areas: leadership intervention and coaching programs; restorative services for misconduct; continuous and meaningful consultation and engagement; and establishing an Analytic Support Centre on Conduct and Culture and creating a public-facing dashboard.

Holding Senior Leaders Accountable for Culture Change

Achieving culture change success depends on senior leadership's ability to provide a safe environment that fosters open communication and participation by every team member. While we are equipping senior leaders with the tools they need to create an inclusive environment, we are also holding them accountable for their ability to achieve it.

In October 2021, the Department of National Defence (DND) /CAF published instructions to senior military leaders entitled, *Inclusion and the Performance Appraisal Process*. Following that, in March 2022, an aide-memoire was released to provide concrete examples of inclusive behaviors to which all CAF members are expected to adhere. Furthermore, starting in the 2022/23 fiscal year, the new Performance and Competency Evaluation System (PaCE) will be used to report on 19 competencies that represent the leadership and organizational behaviors expected of all CAF members. This means that inclusive behaviors are now an integral part of the performance appraisal process, and will be captured on an annual basis through the normal appraisal cycle of a members' performance. Under the new system, members' performance will be evaluated against competencies tied to the CAF's core values and what is needed for leadership development.

Selection of Future Leaders

Research is underway to develop an evidence-based framework for leader assessments that provides a more holistic assessment of character to support the selection and promotion of personnel. However numerous constraints shape the identification of tools that can be used. The process must be legally defensible (a requirement of any promotion-selection process), linked to the job, valid, reliable and free from adverse impact. Most practitioners and researchers agree that multi-assessor assessment (also known as 360°) tools should be used primarily for developmental purposes, as they provide well-rounded feedback from multiple

sources, are less likely to be subject to bias if assessors are selected carefully, and provide insight into the developmental needs of the individual being assessed. These tools are not typically recommended for selection purposes for numerous reasons. Although multi-assessor assessment tools are not recommended for selection purposes, one way to capitalize on the wealth of information is to leverage them as a confirmatory tool, similar to a reference check. To that end, the CAF is presently employing multi-assessor assessments as a confirmatory tool for promotion to or within the General Officer/Flag Officer (GOFO) rank. Assessors for this assessment are chosen based on familiarity with the candidate's on-the-job behaviour, including at least one superior, and a minimum of three assessors selected for each of the following categories; colleague, direct & indirect report, and other. This means that no less than ten people will assess a candidate. To ensure diversity amongst GOFOs and to reduce bias, assessors across all four categories should be a mix of male, female, officer, non-commissioned member, civilian employee, Primary Reserve, Anglophone, Francophone, and Visible Minority perspectives, where possible. Multi-assessor assessments are resource intensive, and place a heavy strain on equity-seeking groups who are repeatedly asked to act as assessors in order to generate diverse perspectives. Therefore, multi-assessor assessments must be used in a deliberate manner. Ongoing research will further inform the leader promotion-selection framework moving forward, and set the stage for the development of a comprehensive framework that extends to rank levels other than the General Officer/Flag Officer ranks.

Civilian Employees within the Defence Team

With respect to public service employees, inclusivity has been determined as one of the key pillars for effective leadership in all areas of the Defence Team.

As it pertains to the assessment and selection of Defence Executives, all assessments include an evaluation of the candidates' Key Leadership Competencies (KLCs). The six (6) KLCs are: Create Vision and Strategy, Mobilize People, Uphold Integrity and Respect, Collaborate with Partners and Stakeholders, Achieve Results and Promote Innovation and Guide Change. These KLCs set out the fundamental expectations of leadership within the federal public service context and are a mandatory component of the [Executive \(EX\) Group Qualification Standard](#) and the [Directive on the Performance and Talent Management for Executives](#).

Furthermore, 360 reviews, along with psychometric assessments, are already used to bolster the assessment of Defence Executives. Work is underway to evaluate the incorporation of these assessments into performance management metrics and evaluations, and align with the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO) guidance and initiatives.

Leadership Intervention and Coaching

In addition to the work on holding individual leaders accountable, the Defence Team is also developing programs to provide targeted intervention and coaching support to units and to individual leaders to address any specific deficiencies that may have an impact on workplace culture, through the Leadership Support Team and Coaching Program, within the newly created

Chief of Professional Conduct and Culture.

Recommendation #13: *That the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces improve the collection of disaggregated data relating to individuals who are leaving the Canadian Armed Forces. In particular, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces should ensure that exit interviews are mandatory, and that they include questions concerning the circumstances of departure, career progression and work environment. Finally, provided that confidentiality and security requirements are met, data requested by external researchers should be made available.*

The Government of Canada partially agrees with this recommendation.

The CAF is committed to taking an evidence-based approach to better understand the reasons its members are releasing from the CAF. Currently, the CAF conducts a 'CAF Exit Survey', which is a voluntary web-based survey offered to Regular Force and Primary Reserve members who have decided to voluntarily release. The survey assesses a variety of topics, ranging from organizational issues to family-related and work-life balance concerns, and gives the opportunity to clarify what factors influenced a member's decision to release. Furthermore, the CAF has developed a Retention Strategy, which is expected to be released in 2022 and will include the implementation of a mandatory exit interview (referred to as the Unit Retention Interview). This initiative will help DND/CAF gain a better understanding of the reasons why members are leaving to inform future retention policies. However, while the Unit Retention Interview is mandatory, commanding officers cannot force a member to provide responses to questions they feel unwilling to answer.

DND/CAF recognizes the importance of sharing survey data with external researchers to help identify and address trends related to recruitment and retention. Pending there are no security or privacy concerns and all security requirements are met, and appropriate data sharing agreements are in place, DND/CAF continues to be open to sharing data with external researchers. However, confidentiality, security, and privacy are of utmost priority to ensure DND/CAF can continue to protect its members, missions, and operational security. As such, approval of data requests are determined on a case-by-case basis.

Civilian Component

A formal whole-of-department exit interview process does not currently exist for Public Servant members of the Defence Team. The Department is exploring options in this regard with an objective to collect data that will directly inform future human resources policies. The Department will also work with the CAF to seek opportunities to leverage the 'CAF Exit Survey'.

Recommendation #14: *That the Government of Canada study and report on the treatment of Francophones in the Canadian Armed Forces and assess the effects on retention and recruitment.*

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

The CAF is committed to respecting the linguistic rights of its Francophone and Anglophone members. As part of its efforts on culture change, the CAF initiated, in 2021, a new program to better understand how the organization can help its members from both official language communities flourish and thrive in a genuinely bilingual environment. This program is comprised of a variety of surveys and initiatives, the results of which directly inform amendments to existing policies and programs, and/or potential new ones.

Furthermore, all large-scale surveys administered within DND/CAF are analyzed by key demographic variables, including first official language status. Many of the questions in these surveys are applicable to understanding retention and recruitment from a variety of perspectives. For example, every other year the “Your Say Survey: Programs and Policies” contains a dedicated section on official languages, which is developed and revised as needed in coordination with the Director of Official Languages. This section assesses availability of tools and services in the respondents’ official language of choice, in addition to their perceived freedom to communicate using their official language of choice in a variety of work contexts.

Recommendation 15: *That the Government of Canada allocate stable and long-term resources designed to address backlogs in the Canadian Armed Forces’ grievance system. As well, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces should review the causes of the backlogs and make appropriate changes to the process to ensure timely decisions in the future.*

The Government agrees with this recommendation.

In 2021, the CAF issued a directive clarifying expectations in terms of grievance resolution, and set in motion the planning and implementation of several flagship initiatives aimed at improving grievance processes and outcomes. These initiatives address grievance administration backlogs at multiple levels (i.e. at the initial assessment and at the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) levels), streamline current processes, and set the conditions for long-term support to the CAF Grievance System (CAFGS). Some progress has already been observed, including a modest reduction in backlogs, but the CAF continues to reallocate resources to better address these issues. The Canadian Forces Grievance Authority (CFGGA) also continues to review the grievance system, with a view to identifying further efficiencies within existing resources. This review will also identify any potential new resource requirements and include them in supplemental submissions to address the backlog.

Two recent external reports, by Justices Fish (Third Independent Review of the *National Defence Act*) and Arbour (Independent External Comprehensive Review of DND/CAF with respect to sexual misconduct), made varying recommendations regarding methods to address issues with the CAF grievance system. A number of their recommendations speak to enhancing or enforcing accountabilities, and these recommendations are undergoing further analysis to

identify proposed changes. While a much needed change in culture and mindset (i.e. efforts to improve diversity, promote a safe and healthy workplace) is already underway, these reports provide a strong foundation for this very important work.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Recommendation #2: *That the Government of Canada increase efforts to promote greater diversity in the Canadian Armed Forces. These efforts should include the creation of outreach and engagement strategies designed to attract underrepresented groups, with these strategies implemented particularly in urban centres and rural and remote Indigenous and Northern communities, and adequately resourced.*

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

As outlined in Canada's defence policy – *Strong, Secure, Engaged* – people are at the core of the CAF. The future of the CAF is dependent upon its ability to reflect the diverse voices and experiences of the Canadian population. DND/CAF understands it needs to do more to ensure greater diversity and inclusion, and efforts are underway to better attract underrepresented groups in the CAF.

National Defence continues to leverage advertising and marketing campaigns to raise awareness of the opportunities that the CAF has to offer. Specifically, National Defence has various advertising campaigns that seek to raise general awareness of careers in the CAF, along with more targeted campaigns that encourage participation of women, Indigenous peoples, Reserve Force, and occupations that face significant staff shortages. National Defence continues to launch social media campaigns where potential recruits can speak directly to a recruiter, or participate in a 'question and answer' session with female CAF members.

Recruiting Women

In 2017, National Defence launched the Women in Force Program (WFP), a pilot program which seeks to provide women with the opportunity to learn about military life before they decide to join the CAF, enabling participants to make an informed decision about a career in the military. The WFP gives women the opportunity to talk with current CAF members while experiencing different facets of a military lifestyle. While the program was put on hold at the beginning of the pandemic due to recruiting and training capacity limits, DND/CAF intends to reinvigorate it, as part of the broader Diversity in the CAF partnership program. Planning and limited events are expected to take place in 2022/2023, with a more fulsome rollout in 2023/2024 and beyond. DND/CAF will then develop an advertisement campaign to attract participants.

At the same time, applicants of designated groups under the CAF's 2021 Employment Equity Plan (such as women and gender-diverse individuals) continue to receive priority processing in the selection process for CAF opportunities.

Recruiting Indigenous Peoples

The CAF continues to develop relationships with Indigenous communities and their leaders to increase awareness of the opportunities Canada's military has to offer. A number of initiatives and programs exist within the CAF to enhance the representation of Indigenous People within the CAF, such as the Aboriginal Leadership Opportunity Year, the CAF Indigenous Entry Program and the CAF Indigenous Summer Programs. These initiatives aim to increase the representation of Indigenous people in the Regular and Reserve Forces through incentives, temporary programs and tailored training.

Recommendation #6: *That the Government of Canada examine the advantages and disadvantages of easing eligibility requirements to allow non-citizens who obtain proper security clearances to join the Canadian Armed Forces.*

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Current citizenship requirements to enroll in the CAF stipulate that the applicant must be either a Canadian citizen or have a permanent resident status in Canada under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. In the case of permanent residents, they must meet a special need in the CAF by possessing in-demand qualifications or skill sets to be considered eligible (see below). All applicants must also complete security screening and assessments and meet the relevant requirements of the aptitude test, medical assessment, and interview.

To help address recruitment shortcomings in the CAF, there is a process in place for foreign citizens with military service in other countries to apply to enroll as Foreign Skilled Military Applicants (FSMA). This initiative enables the CAF to bring in experienced individuals who can contribute their skills to missions and rapidly fill positions that are critically under-staffed. As this selective process is typically targeted to highly specialized positions, such as experienced fighter pilots, it does not impact broader recruitment efforts due to the very limited number of successful applicants. This process still requires that individuals meet Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) guidelines and requirements before being processed through the CAF recruiting system. After three years of service, foreign members can apply for citizenship through the normal process.

In 2019, DND/CAF was planning to develop a working group with implicated departments, to discuss the implications of potentially accelerating the citizenship process and increasing the likelihood that FSMA candidates would be selected for permanent resident status. This work was temporarily delayed as a result of other urgent and immediate priorities. DND/CAF will consider reinvigorating these discussions. Additionally, the CAF is also exploring ways to increase enrollment of permanent residents.

Recommendation #9: *That the Government of Canada improve the accessibility of services in French to members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families, regardless of their geographic location. That the Canadian Armed Forces provide communication in both official*

languages to its members.

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

DND/CAF is committed to ensuring all its members can receive services in both official languages anywhere in Canada and when deployed abroad. This includes academic, military leadership and physical fitness training in both official languages through the CAF's bilingual facilities, military colleges, and national training establishments. The CAF's policy on Language of Service states that services provided to CAF members and their families have to be provided in both official languages both across Canada and abroad. While this can be limited by the availability of a bilingual service provider, DND/CAF is working to reduce the gap.

Furthermore, work is underway to update the CAF language policy. The intent is to meet and, in some cases, exceed the obligations as established in the *Official Languages Act* by designating CAF organizations and units as bilingual with the aim of ensuring CAF members can communicate in either official languages with their chain of command. The upcoming five-year Official Languages Action Plan, scheduled to be published in April 2023, also aims to reinforce linguistic rights of all DND/CAF personnel.

Furthermore, in February 2022, the CAF developed feminized military ranks. Each individual will now be able to choose the title that best represents their gender identity and gender expression.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Recommendation #3: *That the Government of Canada take action to improve public awareness of the range of Canadian Armed Forces' job opportunities. These efforts should ensure that information concerning each individual job, related compensation and benefits and timeline for enrollment is clear and accessible.*

The Government agrees with this recommendation.

Recruiting is a critical activity that calls upon the active and coordinated participation of all elements of DND/CAF. The CAF has a standing operation, known as Operation GENERATION, which is dedicated to this effort and combines all activities relating to attraction, enrolment, and initial training of CAF members. Guided by Operation GENERATION, CAF's attraction efforts are proactive, precise, data-enabled, and talent-focused, offering applicants a compelling value proposition.

As part of these efforts, the forces.ca website provides a detailed overview of the specific occupations in the CAF, including specific occupational roles and their related responsibilities, required training, entry plans, and direct entry options. The website also provides an overview of the type of pay and benefits offered to CAF members, amongst other information, and clearly outlines the many ways in which potential candidates can get in touch with DND/CAF.

In 2017, the CAF initiated a review of military compensation to examine all offerings linked to an individual's military career. Improving human resources approaches is paramount for the CAF to compete with Canada's private and public sector employers, attract and retain the right people, and maintain its operational capabilities at home and abroad.

In June 2022, National Defence released the new guide, 'CAF Offer', which provides a clear and accessible summary of human resources policies, programs, monetary and non-monetary benefits, as well as and practices provided to CAF members and their families, including an array of monetary and non-monetary offerings.

In July 2022, the CAF Offer Interactive Guide was also released as an all-in-one CAF Human Resources information tool. It provides a user-friendly bilingual portal for all CAF personnel to explore and discover the full range of what the CAF has to offer. It provides CAF members with the most up-to-date information on topics such as pay, healthcare, leave, relocation, transition, education, professional development, family support, diversity and inclusion, health and wellness, and more. While the CAF Offer Guide will initially be accessible on the internal DND/CAF network, National Defence is working to migrate the product to the internet and eventually other platforms to allow for greater access and broader reach and capability. Although not a designed as a recruiting tool, when the internet-facing version of the CAF Offer is posted to the Canada.ca website, it could provide an opportunity to improve public awareness of the benefits offered to CAF members.

Recommendation #4: *That the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces take concrete steps to reduce delays at each stage in the Canadian Armed Forces' recruitment process. Furthermore, the Government of Canada should increase the funding allocated to the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group, and should ensure that serving in the Canadian Armed Forces in a recruitment capacity is not detrimental to career progression.*

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

DND/CAF recognizes that the current CAF recruitment process is challenged by inefficient processes and outdated systems that are contributing to delays. In her report, Former Supreme Justice Arbour made a similar recommendation (Rec.20) to improve and simplify the recruitment process. The CAF is therefore looking at ways it can improve its current recruitment processes, with a view to reducing delays and ensuring a smooth transition through each stage of the process. More specifically, National Defence is planning on implementing three lines of effort to help modernize its recruitment process: (1) digitize the recruitment process to streamline and automate existing processes; (2) redesign the recruiting processes with an initial focus on the medical screening process to ensure the administrative sequencing of members is correct and efficient; and, (3) enhance CAF branding and conduct targeted advertising, marketing and attractions activities in partnership with senior leadership across the Defence Team to convey to Canadians the value of a career in the CAF. Efforts undertaken as part of this process, especially on digitalization and screening, are expected to help address issues related

to delays.

In the meantime, the CAF is incentivizing employment within CAF recruitment centres by recognizing varied work experiences, and highlighting CAF leadership growth opportunities. To this end, the CAF is looking at fully staffing the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group to maximize capacity in this critical organization.

Recommendation #5: *That the Government of Canada, in its review of the universality-of-service requirement in the Canadian Armed Forces, explore options for the meaningful involvement of individuals who do not meet baseline requirements.*

The Government of Canada partially agrees with this recommendation

The CAF's unique role requires its members to be deployable and able to perform a wide range of tasks. The minimum operational standard, which is the baseline requirement for CAF members' readiness, allows our military to quickly provide support to emergency responses across Canada and to conduct operations abroad. The CAF is in the process of modernizing the universality-of-service policy and its standards to better respond to the evolution of CAF roles and operations and to reflect developments in Canadian human rights law. This process is informed by evidence-based research and analysis. It is anticipated that the updated universality-of-service policy will be released in 2024.

For CAF members who do not meet the minimum requirements in the medical category for their respective occupation (e.g. vision requirements for pilots), they are strongly encouraged to explore transfer options so that they can continue a meaningful employment in the CAF in another occupation for which they meet the standard or as a civilian with the Defence Team. Transition supports are informed by subject matter experts and Gender Based plus considerations to ensure they are personalized and focus on the individual's overall well-being. National Defence is currently implementing a new Military to Civilian Transition process across the CAF to provide comprehensive, professional, personalized, and standardized transition services to all CAF members. The new system focuses on member retention, with a focus on members that self-identify as part of underrepresented populations.

Before any transition back into civilian life, National Defence provides the member with options to continue to be a part of the Defence Team with a view to retaining their corporate knowledge and providing continued employment within the organization. If injured as a result of military service, members are also given priority staffing for positions within the Public Service, including within the Defence Team. They can also be hired as a contractor, or as a part of the Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service, a sub-component of the Reserve Force that supervises, administers and trains cadets.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING SUPPORTS TO CANADIAN ARMED FORCES FAMILIES AND EASING THE BURDEN OF SERVICE

Recommendation #7: *That the Government of Canada work with provincial and territorial partners to provide childcare, healthcare, education and employment-related supports that meet the specific needs of Canadian Armed Forces personnel and their families.*

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Strong, Secure, Engaged called for an enhanced dialogue between federal, provincial, and territorial partners to improve the coordination of services across Canada and ease the burden of frequent relocation on CAF families. In response to this commitment, the Seamless Canada initiative was launched in 2018 to help ensure a seamless experience for CAF members and their families as they move between different jurisdictions when they relocate. It is a vehicle to raise awareness and improve support for military families by enhancing cooperation between provincial and territorial governments and DND/CAF. Since its launch, the forum has led to several improvements in all jurisdictions and enabled discussions on CAF families' key challenges, including:

- Improving access to health care by waiving the 90-day waiting period for CAF families to enroll in provincial health care systems;
- Securing essential worker status of CAF members; ensuring CAF members can fulfill their duties and receive services during the pandemic;
- Launching discussions on education barriers for students relocating between jurisdictions; and,
- Leveraging employment and training support services for military spouses.

The most recent Seamless Canada Conference, held on June 14, 2022, in Ottawa, represented an important milestone in strengthening the partnership with provinces and territories and laying the ground work for further cooperation, including in areas such as labour mobility and CAF families' access to health care and child care in different jurisdictions. The next Seamless Canada Conference is expected to be held in fall 2022.

Recommendation #8: *That the Government of Canada explore opportunities to limit relocation for Canadian Armed Forces members with families when operationally possible.*

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

CAF members are required to remain mobile and deployable to meet the needs of the CAF and to enhance training and experience, however the Government recognizes the demand and strain this can put on CAF members and their families. Difficult and unpredictable personal circumstances can arise, and the CAF recognizes that greater flexibility is required to help our members. The CAF is currently exploring an Adaptive Career Path initiative that would modernize CAF employment to provide greater flexibility in career options. While this initiative is still in the early stages of development, it could include measures such as transfers between Regular and Reserve Force (and back), temporary switch to part-time status, and remote work. Over the next several years, National Defence will assess the types of flexible career options

that current and future CAF members desire, identify the mechanisms, policies, and directives that would need to be implemented and/or amended to achieve the desired result, and ensure that operational requirements and commitments can continue to be met. In the meantime, DND/CAF will continue to implement its interim policy that enables remote work if and where possible for both the member and the CAF.

There are also additional considerations for CAF members where personal circumstances may temporarily limit their ability to deploy or perform certain duties, or to relocate to a different geographic location. In these circumstances, CAF members can apply for a compassionate status or posting that takes into account their circumstances.

Recommendation #10: *That the Government of Canada immediately adjust the Post Living Differential to reflect current economic conditions, including in relation to housing costs. As well, the Government should review the differential on an ongoing basis to ensure that Canadian Armed Forces personnel do not experience adverse financial consequences arising from postings.*

The Government of Canada will take this recommendation into consideration.

National Defence recognizes the various challenges that relocation poses to CAF members and their families, DND/CAF is committed to assisting members throughout the posting process and offer a full suite of housing benefits to ease the burden of relocation. This includes:

- Reimbursing legal fees, and real estate fees related to relocation;
- Covering the shipping and related expenses of household goods and effects;
- Benefits for selling and buying their own residences, including covering dual residency expenses and providing home equity assistance, a mortgage interest differential, and mortgage default insurance; and
- Allowing members to move to a new location unaccompanied, with lodging at the new location reimbursed for up to six months, if challenges are encountered while selling or buying a home, or a member's family needs more time to adjust to the posting.

Additionally, National Defence works with CAF members to provide advice on housing options that is adapted to their situation, including purchasing a home, renting, or living in military housing.

Separately, members are offered competitive compensation, and a suite of benefits that can be extended to their family. Some of the benefits offered to CAF members include environmental allowances for austere working conditions, maternity / parental top-up, and the Post Living Differential (PLD). The PLD is designed to moderate the impacts associated with moving to a higher cost of living area experienced. National Defence has initiated a review of the PLD policy. While the PLD cannot be adjusted until this work is completed, National Defence agrees that the PLD requires revisions to ensure it meets the needs of today's CAF members.

Recommendation #11: *That the Government of Canada take actions to create flexible career mobility arrangements within the Canadian Armed Forces. To that end, the Government should work with its provincial and territorial counterparts to eliminate interprovincial/interterritorial barriers to recognizing professional credentials. As well, the Government should ensure that transitions between the Regular Force and the Reserve Force occur easily and with minimal bureaucracy. Finally, the Government should facilitate partnerships between the Canadian Armed Forces and the private sector with the goal of providing career development opportunities and knowledge transfer.*

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation.

Consistent with *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, work is currently underway to improve the CAF employment model to provide flexible career options that support a member's journey within the CAF. This includes, but is not limited to: reducing the burden of relocation through the Seamless Canada Initiative, transfer from the Regular Force to Primary Reserve, occupational transfer, compassionate posting, imposed restriction (i.e. delayed relocations of dependents or furniture following deployment within Canada), flexible or remote work policies, and developing the Adaptive Career Path initiative to provide CAF members with more flexibility to suit their individual circumstances over the course of their career. The CAF is also increasing staffing levels by hiring additional analysts to process transfers from the Reserve Force to the Regular Force to shorten processing time. Work is underway to simplify the application, assessment and selection process.

In addition, under the Seamless Canada Initiative, labour mobility and the recognition of professional credentials, including for military spouses/partners, are being discussed with provincial and territorial partners, as part of broader efforts to improve support for CAF members and their families.

Despite these efforts, some factors may limit the CAF's ability to provide flexible career arrangements in certain circumstances, for example due to the minimum standard requirements of some trades or occupations, and the requirement to remain mobile and deployable to meet the specific needs of the CAF. Nonetheless, the CAF remains committed to being an employer of choice and continues to explore options to provide flexible career options for its members.

With regards to facilitating secondments with the private sector, the Chief of the Defence Staff has the authority to facilitate and approve secondment opportunities for CAF members. A small number of CAF members are posted with foreign militaries, other government departments and the private sector every year. However, the opportunity for temporary placement has been and continues to be limited due to CAF personnel shortages and retention issues. In her report, former Supreme Court Justice Arbour also recommended facilitating temporary transfers or partnerships between the CAF and the private sector.

Recommendation #12: *That the Government of Canada ensure wages and benefits for employees of the Department of National Defence and members of the Canadian Armed Forces are competitive with the private sector.*

The Government of Canada takes note of this recommendation.

DND/CAF continues to monitor and review the CAF benefits and pay rates to help ensure all members are well compensated for their service to Canada. CAF compensation is linked to public service salaries. As such, in February 2021, the Government of Canada increased military members' rates of pay to ensure alignment with increases received by the Federal Public Service. This pay increase applied to general services officers, pilots, medical and dental officers at the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and below, and all non-commissioned members. To ensure competitiveness and fairness, National Defence and the CAF will continue to monitor changes in the compensation packages for public service employees and work with the Treasury Board Secretariat to adjust, as needed.

The CAF also recently released the CAF Offer, and internal initiative that provides a comprehensive overview of both monetary and non-monetary components of CAF benefits. The CAF Offer will continue to evolve as Government policies evolve, aiming to compete with the private sector, and remaining current with new human resources trends.

5. RECOMMENDATION ON THE OMBUDSMAN'S INDEPENDENCE

Recommendation #16: *That the Government of Canada make the National Defence Ombudsman truly independent and report to Parliament rather than to the Minister of National Defence.*

The Government takes note of this recommendation.

Created in 1998, the Ombudsman's initial mandate focused on increasing transparency and openness in the DND/CAF. Over the years, the role has evolved and the Office of the Ombudsman now works to ensure DND/CAF is fair to current and former CAF members, DND employees, Cadets, family members, and other constituents. These objectives are aligned with the objectives that National Defence has established and the efforts deployed for culture change, increased diversity, inclusion and overall well-being of both its CAF and civilian workforce. As such, the senior leaders and Minister of National Defence are committed to working with the Ombudsman to ensure that National Defence provides a safe and inclusive environment for all.

To fulfill its mission of serving as a neutral party on matters related to DND/CAF, the office of the Ombudsman acts independently of both the military chain of command and of civilian management, and reports directly to the Minister of National Defence. However, consistent with the *Financial Administration Act*, financial, human resources and administrative authorities are delegated to the Ombudsman by the Deputy Minister of the Department of National

Defence. The current model mirrors almost all other similar offices across government, is in line with Canadian legislation and meets the test of proper stewardship of resources.

DND/CAF is dedicated to ensuring a safe and inclusive workplace for all its members. It is also committed to working with the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman's office to ensure that it can effectively fulfill its duties and responsibilities.