



Wounded Warriors Canada

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(Canada Revenue Agency – Charity # 82808-2727-RR0001)

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Canadian Defence Consultation Round Table Submission

Wounded Warriors Canada wishes to thank the committee for its kind invitation to provide input on the future of Defence Policy in Canada. Within the next month or so I will be retiring after a quarter century of service as a Chaplain in Canada's Primary Reserve. My submission is of course informed against that backdrop of service but more importantly by the very nature of the work of Wounded Warriors Canada. As a charity, Wounded Warriors Canada exists because of the outstanding support of Canadians from coast to coast. This support reminds us of the high regard and level of respect that Canadians have for our men and women in uniform and has enabled us to provide a wide range of programming to assist our ill and injured CAF members and their families.

Our ethos is to "Honour the Fallen, Help the Living." It should come as no surprise to the committee that this submission is presented through that lens. As this committee, out of necessity, looks at the big picture as part of long term strategic planning, I would urge the committee not to forget the human impact of policy at the tactical level. It is a well-worn axiom often quoted by leaders at all levels that people are our most important resource. As this Policy Review takes shape I would urge those making decisions not to forget the human impact of your decisions.

Anticipating the future needs of the CAF to enable it to effectively carry out its mission in an ever-changing security environment has never been simple. The many competing departments all seek their share of the federal treasury dollars, which often creates an environment where resources are often challenging. As the Policy Review backgrounder rightly observes, the CAF Key Roles are commonly and generally understood to be Defend Canada; Defend North America and Contribute to International Peace and Security. And yet, as we know, the specifics of what this looks like in terms of funding priorities is always a challenge.

Let me offer a few suggestions informed by history:

1. The last conflict is no guarantee of the force needed to fight or respond to the next security crisis. For example, when I joined the CAF in 1991 the Cold War that defined our policy for so long was ending in the wake of changes in Eastern Europe that saw the Berlin Wall tumble in November of 1989. Policy began to speak of a peace dividend and in Canada the Force Reduction Plan (FRP) was implemented to reduce the size of the CAF. The forces soon lost many of its best trained and experienced leadership and when missions to the former Yugoslavia and the like appeared they were not available.



2. While it is easy to cut capability, especially in the wake of budgetary pressures, it is patently obvious that it is often expensive and slow to rebuild capability. A recent example was the decision to rid the Armoured Corps of its heavy Armour only to realize that the capability was critically needed in Afghanistan.
3. Building on the previous two points, Canada requires a robust, adaptive, multi-role, and combat-capable force. The implication of this is that the procurement process needs to be proactive rather than reactive. The morale of the forces is greatly enhanced when the sailors, soldiers and air personnel feel the support of their government by providing them all the tools and equipment necessary to perform their tasks -- often under adverse and challenging conditions. Canadians expect no less as we ask CAF members to stand in harms way and be ready to respond to a variety of threats. As Canada is a signatory to the 2014 NATO pledge to at least edge towards spending 2% of it's GDP on Defence, I am recommending that we invest towards this target sooner rather than later.
4. Invest in the Primary Reserves. The latest department report on the Reserve Force was not kind to the Canadian Forces. I can tell you from experience that some of Canada's finest men and women serve in the Reserves and they often labour under immense shortages. The reserves employ some of the most resourceful Canadians who find ways to adapt and overcome yet it is hard on morale to be asked over and over again to do more with less. The recent decade long series of deployments to Afghanistan highlighted the need for an effectively trained and equipped Reserve force to sustain operations providing 30% of the deployed force. The added bonus of a healthy Reserve force is that they have a footprint in communities from coast to coast and are not as isolated as their Regular force counterparts, therefore the Reserves ought to be equipped to rapidly respond locally in the event of a local threat within Canada. As always the Reserves will be prepared to provide the framework for mobilization should the nation ever require it.
5. Finally, and most importantly, Canada must more adequately provide for the care and welfare of the members of the CAF and their families. Both Veteran's Affairs Canada and DND continue to speak of a seamless transition and closing the gap between the departments but there is a long way to go on this front. Efforts and resources to lessen the administrative delays and complexities need immediate attention. It is hard for veterans and their families to have faith in a system that is often perceived to be long on announcements and short on delivery. It is hoped that the current review and overhaul of JPSU's and the way Canada's ill and injured are cared for leads to a more positive and supportive environment. We would suggest changes like registering all releasing personnel with VAC prior to their release. While some releasing personnel may never call upon VAC for services, the piece of mind that a file has been started



will go a long way to assisting a veteran when and if they feel the need for help. This will especially be true for those coming forward, sometimes years later, with an OSI.

Leadership in the CAF must lead the way in smashing the stigma that remains prevalent around mental health issues. While we applaud the addition of resources and funding to Health Services, removing the stigma surrounding mental health issues is as much a leadership issue as any other.

It is absolutely unacceptable to hear of released members unable to pay their bills waiting an inordinate amount of time for their pensions and severance, which they had counted on to transition into retirement. No civilian pension plan would be allowed to operate in this way. I can attest to the fact that it took seven years from the time the government announced a Reserve force pension buy back plan and the papers to be filed to confirm the amount.

Respectfully Submitted;

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