



Office of the Auditor General of Canada
Bureau du vérificateur général du Canada

[Français](#) · [Contact Us](#) · [Help](#) · [Search](#) · [Canada Site](#)
[About Us](#) · [Publications](#) · [Media Room](#) · [Site Map](#) · [OAG Home](#)

Report of the Auditor General of Canada



OAG

OAG Report Menu

April 2002 Report

Chapter 5

Main Points

Introduction

Observations

Recruitment

Retention

What other countries
are doing

Managing change in
military human
resources

Conclusion and
Recommendations

About the Audit

Exhibits:

5.1—The Canadian
Forces' trained effective
strength

5.2—Military personnel
on deployment,
1990-1995 and 1996-2001

5.3—Projected
distribution of
non-commissioned
member personnel for
2007

5.4—Years of service
in the Canadian Forces

Inserts:

Some challenging
military occupations

Recruitment and
retention efforts in other
countries

National Defence — Recruitment and Retention of Military Personnel

News Release

Main Points

5.1 The Canadian Forces needs to fill shortages in most of its military occupations. Over 3,000 positions are vacant, many of them in key occupations such as engineers, vehicle and weapons technicians, and doctors and dentists. Currently, there are not enough trained and effective personnel in the Canadian Forces to meet occupational demands.

5.2 Today's shortages are a result of actions taken when National Defence downsized in the mid-1990s. A reduced recruiting level, cuts in human resource management, a lack of information to monitor the health of occupations, and limitations in training capacity have contributed to the current problems. Human resource managers did not have the data to guide recruiting and attrition decisions for each of the military occupations. Today, the military population is unevenly distributed; there are not enough personnel in most occupations and too many in some.

5.3 The Canadian Forces recognizes that it needs to act now to address the shortages. It has increased recruiting and wants to triple its annual intake of new regular force military members from about 2,500 to 7,000 per year as part of its three-year recruiting strategy. Efforts are also under way to examine retention and to offer options to members who are deciding whether to leave or stay.

5.4 Despite efforts, the Canadian Forces' current push to recruit has not attracted enough new regular force members to meet its target of 7,000. We found that the Department is doing good work to correct problems with the recruiting system, but the expanded recruiting efforts are themselves short-staffed. And efforts need to focus more on diversity and on recruiting Canadians from minority groups.

5.5 Previous human resource practices have created peaks and valleys in the distribution of the military population that create some gaps in rank and age distribution and in experience. The Canadian Forces needs its skilled and experienced people to stay in the military and so is looking at retention options. However, many of the retention initiatives under way will be implemented only after some members have decided to leave, and it could take the Canadian Forces as long as 30 years to achieve a stable population profile.

5.6 We are concerned that few military personnel assigned to military human resource management have previous experience or training in human resource policies and practices. While there are opportunities available to take some human resource courses, the Canadian Forces would benefit by having a knowledgeable group, trained and experienced in managing the human resource changes needed over the long-term.

The Department has responded. Overall, National Defence has agreed with our findings and told us it will look at options to improve its human resource

management. It also said it will take steps to report performance measurement results to Parliament at the earliest opportunity.

 [Top](#)

Introduction

5.7 Canada's military has a ceiling on regular force membership of about 60,000. In September 2001, around 57,600 men and women were serving in the Canadian Forces. However, not all of them are available for operations. Some are not yet trained and others are on medical leave or retirement leave, or are unavailable for administrative or disciplinary reasons. At the time of our audit, about 52,300 trained and effective members were serving in the Navy, Army, and Air Force.

5.8 From 1994 to 2000, the Canadian Forces recruited fewer than half the number of people it lost. In its downsizing efforts, it brought in only 14,700 new members while about 31,500 members left. In 1996, departmental researchers warned management that low recruiting levels and an aging military population could leave National Defence short of skilled people to promote by 2003.

5.9 Personnel shortages in defence can be more difficult to correct than in other organizations because militaries usually bring in new people only at the bottom or entry level. Gaps in higher ranks are difficult to correct if not enough people are moving through the system to be promoted to those ranks.

Defence recently announced its new recruiting efforts

5.10 National Defence began a recruiting push in January 2001 to let Canadians know that it is looking for people with the aptitudes and skills to be part of the Canadian Forces. It announced that it would hire up to 7,000 people for the regular force to address what it described as a crisis. Recently, it began offering bonuses to attract recruits already trained in the trades that the Canadian Forces is seeking.

Previous audits have reported on military human resource management

5.11 As far back as the **1990 Report**, the Auditor General commented on the need for a long-term focus in managing military personnel. The audit of human resource management in the Canadian Forces had found that National Defence needed to review its conditions of service, its training, and its lack of information for managing human resources.

5.12 In our **1996 chapter, Peacekeeping**, we noted gaps in National Defence's planning for deployments and rotations and a lack of collective training.

5.13 In our **1998 chapter, Expenditure and Workforce Reduction in Selected Departments**, we found shortages in the Canadian Forces vehicle technician trade and six army combat trades.

5.14 In **2000** the Auditor General warned again that the Canadian Forces needed to review training, and especially needed information to develop performance measures and forecast needs.

5.15 Most recently, in **December 2001** we reported that the Canadian Forces was short of maintenance technicians, that 15 percent were not qualified for the jobs they occupied, and that 50 percent lacked required training.

Focus of the audit

5.16 We conducted our audit to assess whether the Canadian Forces is meeting its goal of having a trained and effective workforce in each of its military occupations. We examined whether National Defence is fixing the problems that led to its current personnel shortages.

5.17 Further information on our audit objectives, scope, and criteria can be

found at the end of the chapter in the section [About the Audit](#).

[▲ Top](#)

Observations

The Canadian Forces does not have enough people in most of its military occupations

5.18 The term "trained effective strength" refers to the number of people in the military who are trained and available for duty. Military force planners estimate the number of people needed in each of the 105 different military occupations; the goal of human resource management is to keep the trained effective strength of each occupation as close to the preferred level as possible.

5.19 Since 1992, the trained effective strength in the regular force has averaged 92 percent of the military population. However, by 2001 the trained effective strength had fallen to 90 percent, and initial departmental projections showed that it could drop to below 80 percent by 2004 ([Exhibit 5.1](#)). The Department expects that people will leave the military in growing numbers over the next several years, and the Canadian Forces must find and train their replacements.

5.20 The number of trained effective people in some military occupations is already very low. For example, we found that the military has only about 80 percent of the preferred number of naval electronics technicians and only 75 percent of fire control system technicians.

5.21 Overall, we found that the Canadian Forces had 3,300 vacant positions in 72 of its occupations, but 21 occupations had a total of 900 people too many. Twelve occupations met their preferred level.

5.22 **The Navy needs people with technical skills.** The Navy has many skilled and demanding occupations, which it needs to go to sea. Any shortages in just a few skills can mean that a ship may have to deploy without enough people or enough fully trained people, or that it may not be able to deploy at all. For example, HMCS *Huron* has been tied to the dock since October 2000, partly because the Navy cannot provide it with enough skilled sailors to put to sea. ([See photograph](#))

5.23 The Navy needs to find and train more naval weapons technicians, communicators, sensor and electronics operators, and engineers. Attrition in its sea combat occupations is high; it loses those people early in their careers. Further, the Navy is concerned about higher-than-average attrition among women.

5.24 Although it has been recruiting, the Navy was still short of trained people in 15 of 21 naval occupations at the time of our audit.

5.25 **The Army needs technicians who can keep its equipment operating and help maintain combat capabilities.** Weapons technicians, fire control systems technicians, engineers, and vehicle technicians are below their preferred levels and not yet showing signs of recovery.

5.26 Attrition in the combat arms occupations, particularly in the infantry, has been concentrated in the first three years of service, when 72 percent of non-commissioned infantry members leave the Canadian Forces. ([See photograph](#))

5.27 Many Army occupations are improving in strength, but 10 of 15 were still short of personnel at the time of our audit.

5.28 **The Air Force is concerned about its personnel.** The Air Force is in better shape than the two other service environments, but it is still concerned about the numbers of its pilots, engineers, and technicians responsible for avionics and electronics.

5.29 The Chief of Air Staff recently noted that "the most critical area for the Air Force is the attrition of experienced pilots, degrading the Air Force's ability to perform its operational mandates and regenerate qualified air crew. In

addition, we may face very high attrition in 2003 when the obligatory service generated by the Pilot Terminable Allowance program finishes." The Pilot Terminable Allowance was introduced in 1998 as a bonus to pilots who agreed to stay for a five-year extension. About 800 allowances were offered and about 550 were accepted, at a total cost of \$35.8 million.

5.30 We found that 7 of 14 Air Force occupations were short of personnel.

The common occupations need the most attention

5.31 The most serious shortages are in the common occupations that account for almost 40 percent of the Canadian Forces population. Of the 55 occupations common to the Navy, Army, and Air Force, 40 are short of trained people. We found that many of these occupations are under more stress than others because they have had higher attrition and fewer recruits since 1999.

5.32 For example, we found that many medical categories, such as dentists and doctors, are staffed at around 20 percent or more below identified needs. Many engineering technician occupations are similarly short-staffed, as are other, more specialized occupations such as lawyers and chaplains. ([See case study](#))

Shortages are affecting priorities

5.33 The Vice Chief of the Defence Staff has set priorities for staffing regular force positions in order to have people where and when they are needed most. These range from priority one to priority six.

5.34 Priority one units—for deployments, international commitments, and selected high-readiness units—should be staffed at 100 percent. Two of the largest overseas deployments, Operation Palladium (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Operation Augmentation (Persian Gulf), had close to 100 percent of personnel who were qualified for their assigned positions. However, we looked at data available in September 2001 on 131 other priority one units and found that only 83 were staffed at 100 percent. The Canadian Forces did not have the personnel to fill 567 of the 5,011 positions in 48 units. Many of these vacancies were in search-and-rescue squadrons and regiments getting ready to deploy. Furthermore, often positions in some NORAD, NATO, and attaché postings were not filled.

5.35 We also looked at staffing in 65 priority two units. These units are important to future operational effectiveness and include concept and doctrine centres, recruiting centres, policy and planning, and joint operations. Priority two units should be staffed at 98 percent, but only 18 of the 61 units we examined met this requirement. Those that did were mainly postal units or public affairs offices. Some recruiting centres, intelligence and communications units, and units needed for policy and planning were short-staffed.

Deployments are increasing the workload for everyone

5.36 Shortages of skilled and experienced people come at a time when deployments for the Canadian Forces have been increasing ([Exhibit 5.2](#)). In 1996, we found that 18 percent of the military personnel deployed between 1990 and 1995 had been deployed more than once for six months or longer. We decided to revisit that analysis in this audit, and we found a significant increase in the number of people called on to serve overseas for six months or longer.

5.37 Between 1996 and 2001, Canada sent twice as many military personnel on deployments of six months or longer as it did from 1990 to 1995. Nevertheless, we found that only 21 percent had been deployed more than once, slightly higher than we found in 1996.

5.38 However, deployments are increasing and the military workforce is

smaller, which means that fewer people are staying behind to do the tasks at home. We found that Canadian Forces members often cited conditions of work, including workload, as a contributing factor to dissatisfaction with the military. Conditions of work and family concerns, which include the amount of time spent away from family, were the two most common reasons given for leaving the military.

More data are needed to study the personnel tempo

5.39 The Department is currently examining how much time members have had to spend away from their families, or "personnel tempo." Early results of the Department's Quality of Life survey suggest that members think they spend too much time away. While it has data on operational tempo, or time on deployments, the Department has no data on how much time members are also called away for other reasons, for example, attending courses, on temporary assignments at recruiting centres, instructing at recruit schools, or filling in where other people have left.

5.40 National Defence has issued an administrative order directing that a member cannot be asked to leave home for at least 60 days after returning from a deployment and will not be deployed again for another 12 months. Exceptions are made if the member signs a waiver, but we found that very few waivers have been submitted. While keeping people at home alleviates concerns about the time spent away from families, it does not address concerns about increased workload.

5.41 We should note, however, the recent increase in waivers submitted by military personnel to be available for deployment to Operation Apollo (Afghanistan).

 [Top](#)

Recruitment

The current focus is on recruiting more people into the military

5.42 We found that the Department has taken action to improve its systems and practices for identifying recruiting requirements. It has reinstated the annual review of military occupations, developed the Strategic Intake Plan to provide direction on recruiting numbers, and identified priorities for recruiting centres. It is monitoring results through the Production, Attrition, Recruiting, Retention Analysis (PARRA) report, which is updated monthly.

5.43 Recruiting centres are speeding up their processes and will be implementing the Canadian Forces Recruit Information Management system to keep better informed of the status of recruiting efforts across Canada.

5.44 The Department has also taken action to position itself as a career option for young Canadians. Fewer Canadians are exposed to the military today than a generation ago. The Department is aiming to raise awareness of the Canadian Forces through increased advertising, supported by a performance measurement plan. Spending on advertising increased from \$3.68 million in April 2000 to \$13.78 million in March 2001.

5.45 Budgets were also increased in 2000-01 for recruiting centre attraction activities at the community level. However, it took another year to begin co-ordinating activities to help recruiters focus their efforts better. A co-ordinator recently began working with recruiting centres to develop performance measures and plan activities.

5.46 In July 2001, the Treasury Board approved recruiting allowances for 19 occupations to help National Defence attract recruits who already have the skills it needs. Up to \$20,000 is available to enrollees who can demonstrate their qualifications and who complete military training. These include, for example, electrical or communications technicians, X-ray technicians, and those with police training. By offering an allowance, the Department is aiming to get people quickly into occupations where they are needed most, especially

those with long training periods such as naval electronics technicians, who can train for over a year. This also helps the Department avoid training costs it would otherwise incur.

Despite efforts, recruiting is below targets

5.47 During the first three quarters of 2001-02, the Canadian Forces was able to recruit about 63 percent of the non-commissioned members it needs and about 55 percent of the officers it needs. The Department expected to bring in about 4,800 new members by the end of December 2001 but recruited only 3,655 into the Canadian Forces.

5.48 While recruiting efforts have increased intake above the levels of previous years, not enough people are entering some occupations to start moving them toward recovery. We found that 29 of the 105 occupations attracted fewer than 50 percent of their year-to-date intake target, including the following:

- dentists, doctors, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and nurses;
- land communications information systems technicians;
- fire control systems technicians; and
- airfield engineers.

5.49 Some occupations have surpassed their recruiting requirements for the year. They include field engineers, communications researchers, cooks, and stewards, all occupations that were already overstaffed. Because of the ceiling on personnel and the limited number of recruits the Canadian Forces can accept, enrolling recruits into an overfilled occupation can be at the expense of an underfilled occupation. We found that the Department continued to accept recruits into occupations that did not need more personnel.

5.50 Overrecruiting occurs when the Strategic Intake Plan, which states how many recruits are needed for each occupation during the year, is not adhered to. The Department says it will take the overages into account as it develops its intake plans for these occupations in the second and third years of the recruiting strategy.

Diversity recruiting needs more work

5.51 The Minister's Advisory Board report, *Gender Integration and Employment Equity 2000*, found that designated groups combined made up fewer than 17 percent of the military population. Since the Canadian Forces has traditionally been made up of young, white males, it has not reflected Canada's demographic make-up.

5.52 Recruiting centres have begun using contact surveys to collect information on who is visiting the centres to find out about joining the military. At the time of our audit, about 5,000 surveys had been filled out and analyzed for the September 2001 Contact Survey Report. The data collected show that the Canadian Forces is still attracting young, white males, mainly English-speaking.

5.53 The Department recognizes that it needs expertise to guide diversity recruiting and training. It recently contracted with a firm to train recruiters in diversity by March 2002.

5.54 It is also moving ahead with programs to give Aboriginal youths the chance to try the Canadian Forces and then decide if they want to join. It is advertising the Aboriginal programs through posters.

5.55 Attraction and diversity activities are starting and will need to be sustained, but it is too early to tell whether efforts are reaching minority audiences. The limited data available, however, indicate that more work is needed.

Some recruiters are hard to find

5.56 A challenge for recruiters right now is to ensure that there are enough of them to do recruiting. Staffing recruiter positions is a priority two. However, we found that most recruiting centres were short of recruiters, even though the Department is augmenting their numbers with personnel on short-term assignments. Recruiting centres overall were staffed at about 90 percent of needed levels. ([See photograph](#))

Post-basic recruit training is showing signs of strain

5.57 The basic recruit training school at St-Jean-Iberville responded quickly to the need to double its annual capacity and train up to 6,000 enrollees. During the current recruiting surge, the Navy, Army, and Air Force as well as the training system at CFB Borden have been called upon to train enrollees when St-Jean is at full capacity. Currently, the Army is conducting most of this training at CFB Gagetown.

5.58 However, bottlenecks in the system are beginning to show. Upon completing basic recruit training, members go on to their respective trades or occupational training. We found that more members are waiting for spaces to open at the trades schools, and the waiting time is increasing between the end of basic training and the start of instruction to become a skilled technician. This was identified as a risk in the recruiting strategy and will have to be addressed by the Canadian Forces.

[▲ Top](#)

Retention

More people are expected to leave

5.59 The Department projects that a large group of skilled and experienced members could start leaving the Canadian Forces by 2004. This could create a gap in experience because the distribution of the military population shows that it is short of people to fill the vacancies created by those who will be leaving ([Exhibit 5.3](#)). The June 2001 Naval Retention Action Plan warned that given "the present Canadian economy, coupled with the impending retirement of the baby boomers, the Canadian Forces should anticipate increased attrition as the bulk of our personnel [become eligible to leave] simultaneously."

5.60 We also found that many members will soon have enough years of service to be eligible to leave and, again, there is a shortage of people behind them to fill in ([Exhibit 5.4](#)).

5.61 Because the military generally fills its ranks internally by bringing in recruits and officer cadets and working them up through the military structure, there is currently little opportunity to fill this demographic trough. People must be trained and gain experience before they can be promoted to fill the empty positions, especially positions whose responsibilities include leadership.

5.62 We reported in our [December 2001 chapter, National Defence In-Service Equipment](#), that because of shortages of skilled people, some people were being promoted to, or acting in, positions for which they were not yet fully qualified.

5.63 Peaks and valleys in the distribution of the military population will have to work their way through the Canadian Forces. Departmental research staff estimate that, depending on recruiting success, it could take up to 30 years before the military population profile is such that the right numbers are available with the skills and experience to match the demand.

Experienced people are needed

5.64 Despite the Department's efforts, attrition is still a problem in some groups. For several years the Department did not track reasons for leaving, and now it does not have complete or reliable data that would help it to focus

retention efforts. Some survey work that has been completed indicates that most military members who leave voluntarily do so for the following reasons:

- family concerns, for example, stability and the impact of regular moves, spousal employment, or the time spent away from families (personnel tempo);
- organizational climate and morale, including the conditions of service, workload, and the perception that better employment is available elsewhere; and
- concerns about leadership. ([See photograph](#))

5.65 In July 2001, the Department defined its retention strategy and initiatives to encourage skilled and experienced members to remain in the Canadian Forces. Some initiatives are in place to address current attrition, such as extending the compulsory retirement age to 60 years. The Department has made progress on the Quality of Life initiatives, reporting that it has completed 55 of the 89 recommendations by the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. Progress includes instituting pay increases, creating the Centre for the Care of the Injured, improving military housing, and putting in place projects to support military families.

5.66 The Canadian Forces recently completed a Quality of Life survey to find out whether the concerns of members and their spouses are being addressed and to establish a baseline for measuring future progress. The survey showed low satisfaction with progress on initiatives that members feel are the most important; it also showed that communication about initiatives needs to be improved. Nevertheless, 50 percent of respondents said that quality of life in the Canadian Forces was good or very good.

5.67 Members who leave have expressed concerns about leadership. The survey work available indicates that their views on leadership have been shaped by the inability to get adequate equipment, failure to address personnel tempo, poor communications, and lack of direction.

5.68 Because the Department has not analyzed why people leave the Canadian Forces voluntarily, it must now get reliable information before it can develop appropriate retention initiatives. By mid-2002, the Department expects to have an updated version of its Canadian Forces Attrition Information Questionnaire and to have a formal exit interview process in place. The Director Military Human Resource Requirements and the Director Military Employment Policy are working with managing authorities for the occupations to identify attrition patterns and address them.

5.69 The Navy, Army, and Air Force have each mandated a group to work on improving retention. The Navy and Air Force have developed retention strategies and taken some action on their own, for example, providing allowances for pilots and increasing opportunities for promotion. Progress on retention initiatives is to be reported to the ADM Human Resources (Military). The Army has recently begun developing its retention program.

5.70 Other retention initiatives will be implemented over a longer time frame and we are concerned that longer-term changes will be made only after the group soon eligible to leave has left. The examination of personnel tempo has a completion date of 2002. Work to make the terms of service more flexible has begun but will not be completed until 2004. The review of the military occupation structure is to be completed in 2005.

5.71 Female attrition has been higher than male attrition. Between 1989 and 2000, the overall rate among women was 7.6 percent; it was 6.9 percent for men. Data on attrition in minority groups are not available. We found few retention initiatives aimed at women or minority groups. In the December 1999 Canadian Forces Employment Equity Plan, the Department had expected that all its employment equity plans for the Navy, Army, and Air Force, as well as corporate-level plans, would be completed by February 2000. However, their completion is now expected in spring 2002.

What other countries are doing

5.72 Other militaries besides Canada's are facing recruiting and retention challenges. We looked at approaches in the United States, the UK, and Australia and found a few common themes (see "[Recruitment and retention efforts in other countries](#)"). Recruiters are finding that today's youth are looking for opportunities to improve their education and develop skills that are marketable in the private sector. Bonuses and incentive programs are used to attract these people. Recruiters are also finding that they need to get their image out to potential recruits and are increasing their advertising budgets.

5.73 People with skills in some specialty occupations need to be retained. Re-enlistment bonuses are offered by some as an incentive to stay; the Australians are also looking at more flexible work conditions.

 [Top](#)

Managing change in military human resources

5.74 The Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) Human Resources (Military) produced the first annual Long Term Capability Plan (Human Resources) in November 2000 to give order and corporate visibility to its human resource projects, estimated to cost about \$142 million for 2001-02 and \$164 million for 2002-03. Because the plan is presented to senior defence management and spending is approved by the Program Management Board, human resource issues are brought to senior management's attention. Human resources was the top departmental priority last year and is again this year.

5.75 We examined six of the largest projects and found that they are generally on track and managed well. However, we found that the issues addressed in the projects were identified through external reviews rather than internal analyses of military human resource concerns.

5.76 Few military staff in human resource management have previous experience or human resource expertise to bring to the projects. The Canadian Forces does not have an occupation that is specific to managing its almost 60,000 military personnel. Personnel are assigned to this area on a rotational basis as part of the regular posting cycle, and they arrive with valuable military knowledge but often limited experience in human resource policies and planning. The Department is providing the opportunity to take some human-resource-related courses.

5.77 As far back as [1990](#), the Auditor General reported on the need for better performance information to manage human resources in the military. We found that many separate groups were looking at resource requirements and gathering their own data. Most of the information gathered was for special requests or research, but little was used for ongoing monitoring.

5.78 The ADM Human Resources (Military) Business Plan 2002-03 calls for performance measures to monitor and report on intake, attrition, morale, professional development, and quality of life. We encourage the Department to develop these measures and track progress. The Department is also conducting surveys on quality of life and attrition; it recognizes that if these efforts are to be worthwhile, data must be collected regularly and trends monitored.

5.79 The ability to take appropriate action based on what performance measures indicate about attrition, morale, quality of life, and other areas would benefit from knowledgeable and experienced military human resource managers who can identify issues and be part of the change process over the long term.

5.80 In order to conduct trend analyses and to monitor improvements, human resource managers need reliable information on results. We found that not all the data are consistent and not all users find the data reliable or timely. We had difficulty getting some information, for example, on how many members are in the Canadian Forces, how many members are on the Supplementary

Personnel Holding List, and what the actual attrition rate is in the Canadian Forces. We got different answers depending on whom we asked. We found that data used for personnel management are not always consistent or reliable.

[▲ Top](#)

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.81 The Department's activities to address personnel shortages in its military occupations are ongoing, and its strategies for recruitment and retention have identified what needs to be done. However, recruiting and retention initiatives need to be developed together, and the Department has not fully integrated these two strategies. Recruiting initiatives are now under way to address immediate concerns, while retention initiatives are being developed to implement over the next few years.

5.82 While the Department is doing good work to bring in more recruits, it will have to address longer-term issues of human resource management, especially as it develops initiatives in response to current work on quality of life and conditions of service, matching of military requirements and changing demographics, and its efforts to address family concerns and personnel tempo. The Canadian Forces would benefit by having dedicated human resource professionals who are knowledgeable about both the military and human resource policies and practices.

5.83 **Recommendation.** The Canadian Forces should consider adopting a human resource management occupation to ensure that it maintains the experience and expertise it needs to identify issues, develop policy, and implement changes over the long term.

National Defence's response. The Department will assess the benefits of adopting a professional human resource career field. This will be done in conjunction with a major ongoing project that is examining how all Canadian Forces occupations should evolve to meet future requirements. A series of options for institutionalizing this expertise will be examined.

5.84 Recruiting has undergone some significant changes in overall attraction, intake, and production. The Department has been successful in bringing more people into the Canadian Forces, though not yet at the levels it has targeted. Intake imbalances still exist in occupations; despite strategic intake plans and better monitoring of the staffing levels by occupation, some occupations are getting more recruits than they need and others are not yet showing signs of recovering effective strength.

5.85 The demographics of the Canadian Forces dictate that knowledgeable and skilled people will be leaving, and there is a shortage of personnel behind them to fill vacancies. Many of the retention initiatives will not be implemented until after 2003, by which time many personnel will already have decided to leave. Bringing people in at the bottom means that problems at the higher ranks will be difficult to fix. The Canadian Forces is fast-tracking some people into the corporal rank and this may be applicable to other areas. Nevertheless, it could take up to 30 years before peaks and troughs in the demographic profile level out enough to stabilize the military population.

5.86 **Recommendation.** As it reviews the terms of service and the military occupation structure, the Department should consider all options, including recruiting experienced people into its higher ranks.

National Defence's response. The Department will continue to consider all options. A number of initiatives have been proposed for future development, including more flexible career paths. This would enable Canadian Forces personnel to leave and re-enter the service more easily and acquire broader skills and expertise while doing so. As part of its current recruiting efforts, the Canadian Forces is actively examining its policies for re-enrolment of personnel with prior experience and skills. In some cases, this approach has already paid dividends.

5.87 The Department's information on military human resource management

has not been reliable in the past. This has left it with little or no information on trends and with questionable information about who is in the Canadian Forces. Information gathering and data analysis are managed better than before, but more monitoring of results is needed. The ADM Human Resources (Military) has tasked his staff to develop performance measures.

5.88 Recommendation. Performance measures should be in place soon and the results included in the departmental performance report to Parliament. The Department should ensure that its human resource management information is accurate and up-to-date.

National Defence's response. While the Canadian Forces has already instituted a number of performance measures, we acknowledge that more are required. In that regard, steps will be taken to include performance measurement results in the departmental performance report at the earliest opportunity. The Department will also endeavour to ensure that its human resource management information is current and accurate. Information technology systems will be revised to meet identified needs. Some requirements can be easily satisfied with programming "work arounds" while others will take longer to complete. In the interim, the Canadian Forces has mechanisms to meet our informational needs.

[▲ Top](#)

About the Audit

Objectives

The overall objective of our audit was to determine whether the Canadian Forces is maintaining the number of trained and effective personnel it needs for the occupations it has to accomplish its task. We asked the following questions:

Are personnel levels falling and how are shortages affecting operations?

Has the Department identified reasons for its shortages of personnel?

Is the Department taking appropriate steps to correct its problems?

Scope

Our audit focussed on the plans and actions of National Defence to improve its ability to attract and recruit new members to the Canadian Forces and to retain the knowledgeable and skilled members in whom it has invested time and money.

The audit was concerned with the management of human resources at the strategic level. This included activities of the Assistant Deputy Minister Human Resources (Military) in human resource policy and planning and the Environmental Chiefs of Staff in managing the occupations.

Military human resource management is broad, but the audit was limited to two key areas—recruiting research and strategies, and retention research and strategies. This included the policies and guidance that determine the main objectives of recruiting and retention plans.

We monitored departmental information to identify shortages in personnel and changes in personnel levels as recruiting and retention efforts progressed. We also looked at the long-range plans for managing and funding initiatives .

We reviewed experiences of other countries in addressing issues of recruitment and retention. We looked at the approaches that Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom have taken to deal with demographic changes similar to those in Canada and with the changing expectations of military personnel.

Criteria

We expected to observe the following:

That the Canadian Forces military occupations were staffed to at least 90 percent of the preferred level and differences between actual levels and preferred levels were improving.

That recruiting and retention strategies by the Department were supported by analyses of the causes and impacts, addressed the causes and impacts, and were affordable and timely.

That the Department's recruiting and retention strategies provide stability and predictability in managing human resources.

Audit team

Assistant Auditor General: Hugh McRoberts

Principal: Wendy Loschiuk

Director: David Saunders

Erin Campbell

Michael Fong

Anne Hardy

Peter Heckadon

Mary Lamberti

Adèle Lamoureux

For information, please contact Communications at (613) 995-3708 or 1-888-761-5953 (toll-free).

 [Top](#)

Last Updated: 2002-04-16

[Important Notices](#)