DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

CANADA

OPERATIONAL RESEARCH DIVISION

DIRECTORATE OF STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCES

ORD TECHNICAL REPORT TR 2005/09
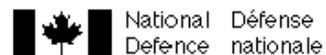
PERSTEMPO Qualitative Data: CF Member Focus Group Findings

By

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February 2005

OTTAWA, CANADA

National Défense
Defence nationale

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SOCIAL SCIENCE OPERATIONAL RESEARCH TEAM

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OTTAWA, ONTARIO   FEBRUARY 2005

ABSTRACT

The PERSTEMPO and Human Dimensions of Deployments Study was established in 2000 to produce a comprehensive evaluation of the consequences – for members of the CF, their families, and the organisation – of trends in increased workload, higher Time Away, and greater frequency and intensity of international deployments (PERSTEMPO). This project report reviews qualitative findings drawn from 214 focus groups conducted among 2136 CF members during site visits to 17 Canadian Forces Bases/Wings/Units across the country and to five international operational theatres (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Golan Heights, Europe, Arabian Gulf, and Eritrea) across 2001. The objective of these focus groups was threefold: to gain an understanding of the incidence of CF members' PERSTEMPO; to gain insight into CF members' perspectives on PERSTEMPO in the CF; and to understand the impacts of PERSTEMPO on members, their loved ones and the organization. The data reported here were used to build quantitative data collection instruments that were administered to several large samples of personnel in 2002. The information presented in this report completes the qualitative stage of the PERSTEMPO and Human Dimensions of Deployment Study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIM

1.   The aim of the "PERSTEMPO and Human Dimensions of Deployments Study" (HDDS) is to produce a comprehensive evaluation of the incidence and impacts of PERSTEMPO among members of the CF, their families, and the organisation.   The HDDS project defines PERSTEMPO as the sum of the demands made by military service upon individuals (including workload, time away, and deployment load).

METHOD

2.   This project report is based on focus group data collected from 214 focus groups with 2136 members during site visits to 17 Canadian Forces Bases/Wings/Units (Alert, Yellowknife, Kingston, Saint-Jean, Borden, Halifax, Esquimalt, Petawawa, Edmonton, Valcartier, Shearwater, Bagotville, Comox, Winnipeg, Trenton, Greenwood, and Cold Lake) and five International Operational Theatres (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Golan Heights, Europe, Arabian Gulf, and Eritrea) throughout 2001. The objective of these focus groups was threefold: first, to gain an understanding of CF members' PERSTEMPO; second, to gain insight into CF members' perspectives on PERSTEMPO in the CF; and finally, to understand the impacts of PERSTEMPO on members, their loved ones and the organization.

FINDINGS

3.   The overwhelming sentiment throughout the groups was that the CF is doing too much with too little. Members consistently expressed that the two most problematic issues facing the CF are lack of resources and lack of personnel. Almost all of the issues discussed in this report can in some way be linked back to these two areas of concern.

4.   Of interest throughout the focus group discussions was the view that the "people" element of the CF, including members and their loved ones, is in a state of extreme difficulty. Whether members were discussing the organization (people frustrated and leaving as a result of their workload and time away), their families (people separating and/or in the process of divorcing as a consequence of PERSTEMPO), or their own personal situations (fatigue and burnout as a result of their heavy workload), it was consistent for members to cast the impact of PERSTEMPO as it then stood in a highly negative light. Of greater interest, however, was the number of contradictions that emerged from these discussions. For example, while members consistently expressed that training standards were eroding as a consequence of under-funding, lack of resources, PERSTEMPO, etc., they also consistently expressed that they were amongt the best-trained military personnel in the world and were being recruited by civilian organizations as a result of their training, experience and expertise. What was unclear from focus group discussions, however, was which aspects of PERSTEMPO were having the greatest impact on members, the organization and their loved ones.

5.   It was also found that while some members excel and find motivation within a high PERSTEMPO environment, for many others it is highly detrimental. Moreover, the impacts of low PERSTEMPO can be just as damaging to members' sense of accomplishment, morale, and willingness to remain in the organization. Regardless of whether one can or cannot sustain the current rate of PERSTEMPO in the CF, focus group findings suggest that finding the right balance between PERSTEMPO and down-time is essential for the well-being of all personnel, their loved ones, and the organization. Simply reducing PERSTEMPO is not the answer.

6.   As is typical of focus groups in this area, some respondents expressed considerable cynicism toward the CF, NDHQ, senior leadership and the Canadian political system. It was clear throughout the focus groups, however, and all available empirical studies demonstrate this conclusively, that there is no shortage of well-meaning, committed personnel to carry the CF's current workload. It was also evident that the great majority of members feel pride in their career and are driven by: being able to do their jobs well (having the proper equipment and training); a belief in the value of their military lives (meaningful work and operations); the belief

that they're making a difference; the challenge of performing difficult tasks; and of the need for continuous learning throughout their career. For many CF members, their pride in serving their country outweighs the harm inflicted upon them by the current pace of operations. Discussions with members suggested that understanding PERSTEMPO and all its associated issues and factors is extremely complex and is not amenable to a "silver bullet" or "one size fits all" solution. Of critical importance to further understanding PERSTEMPO and its impacts is the examination of the themes that have emerged in focus group discussions using survey tools and rigorous statistical analysis.

7.   It should be noted that this report is a summary of the perceptions of CF members who participated in focus groups. **Although these qualitative findings are based upon an unusually large number of participants, the results should not be generalized to the entire CF population. The objective of this phase of the PERSTEMPO project was to identify the range of issues and problems associated with PERSTEMPO, in order that comprehensive surveys could be constructed. The aim was not to accurately represent the views of all CF personnel – that will be accomplished by subsequent phases of the research through quantitative analyses.** The themes and issues discussed herein have been used to generate survey questions that will be used in the quantitative stage of the PERSTEMPO and Human Dimensions of Deployments Study.

8.   Lastly, the findings described in this report must be interpreted with care. The aim of the focus groups was to identify every issue and problem experienced by our members and their loved ones as a consequence of PERSTEMPO in order to assist in the preparation of surveys. The aim was not to accurately portray the overall views of all CF members – that is to be accomplished through quantitative analyses of survey data, and the findings described in forthcoming publications derived from those analyses must be seen to supplant those described in this document.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.   Since the end of the Cold War, the C0anadian Forces (CF) have performed a wide range of operations including peace support, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, aid to civil power, and war-fighting within allied coalitions. They have done so while seeking to maintain robust general-purpose combat capabilities. During this same period, the CF has also faced many challenges in terms of declining capital budgets and shrinking personnel strength.[1] Faced with an increase in operational tempo, CF personnel often find themselves deployed or on field exercises that require them to spend a great deal of time away from their home base and their families. Since 1989, the CF has deployed on 65 missions, compared to 25 missions during the period of 1948-1989 (Special Advisor to the Chief of Defence Staff, 2000:3). The sum of the demands made by military service (or PERSTEMPO) is of particular concern for Canadian military leaders since recent years have seen CF personnel carrying heavier workloads in an attempt to manage multiple requirements (training, courses, garrison duties, etc.). This concern prompted the establishment of the "PERSTEMPO and Human Dimensions of Deployments Study (PERSTEMPO and HDDS)" under the umbrella of the CF Quality of Life (QOL) program (Dunn and Flemming, 2001).

2.0 BACKGROUND: PERSTEMPO AND HDDS

2.   The Directorate of Quality of Life (DQOL) was established following the closure of the Project Management Office for QOL (PMO QOL) in September 2001. The new organisation aims to fulfill the recommendations tabled in the House of Commons in 1998 by SCONDVA. Research activities in DQOL target the five pillars of QOL in the Department of National

Defence: care of injured personnel, accommodations, transitions (including work expectations and conditions of service), compensation and benefits, and family support. DQOL is responsible for: the identification and analysis of real and perceived QOL issues among CF personnel and their families; the development of action plans for the improvement of QOL within the CF; the implementation of action plans for the improvement of QOL for CF members and their families; the monitoring of changes in the status of QOL issues; the support of QOL initiatives from the environmental commands; and the reporting of QOL initiatives and activities to the CF community at large, including family members and spouses. In sum, DQOL is a testament that the Government of Canada is committed "to seeking improvements to the social and economic aspects of life within the Canadian Forces" (Minister of National Defence and Veterans Affairs, 2001: 1).

3.   The PERSTEMPO and HDDS is a comprehensive research initiative that has emerged out of, and is driven by, multiple imperatives. In September 1999, the Assistant Deputy Minister Personnel (ADM PER) requested that a program of research be established, leading to CF personnel being better prepared to deal with the stresses of contemporary peace support operations. This request, along with testimony to recent inquiries and a series of studies (e.g., Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs - SCONDVA), has produced mounting qualitative evidence of problems arising as direct and indirect consequences of increased PERSTEMPO among CF personnel and their loved ones.

4.   The PERSTEMPO and HDDS stems from the widely held belief (based on anecdotal and qualitative data) that CF PERSTEMPO has escalated to a near-unsustainable level. It has been clear for some years that a traditional six-month operational tour outside Canada, for example, actually demands as many as nine months time away from home, when mission-specific and other training requirements are considered. One of the original mandates of the CF QOL program was the articulation of appropriate "Time Away" policies that would balance the demands of service with those of the family. Rigorous data on the impacts of higher PERSTEMPO are required to

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[1] The CF has been reduced from a force size of approximately 90,000 to 60,000 members. Civilian staff have been cut almost in half and the defence budget was cut back by almost 2.7 billion, a decrease of nearly 23 per cent between the period of 1994-1999 (Special Advisor to the Chief of Defence Staff,2000:3).

support the design of these policies, and research to collect such data began in October 1999 (Dunn and Flemming, 2001).

5.   The aim of the PERSTEMPO and HDDS is to produce a comprehensive evaluation of the consequences, for members of the CF, their families, and the organisation, of recent trends in the increased frequency and intensity of international deployments, , Time Away, and workload. The evaluation will examine the incidence of a wide range of hypothesized outcomes of increased PERSTEMPO drawn from military and professional literatures, including stress, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), attrition, health problems, operational repatriation rates, family breakdown, decline in operational effectiveness, decline in unit and individual performance, cumulative impacts of participation in multiple missions over shorter time periods, and other factors. The study will generate rigorous data on the incidence of these problems; estimate their association with PERSTEMPO; support new policies to govern Time Away; and propose a strategic plan to guide all human resource practices and services connected with deploying CF personnel. This comprehensive program of strategic planning, research, and evaluation into PERSTEMPO will identify best practices that will maximise the effectiveness of how the CF prepares and cares for its members and supports their loved ones - in all environments and classifications - in the performance of contemporary missions (Dunn and Flemming, 2001).

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW: PERSTEMPO

6.   Numerous U.S. studies have demonstrated a connection between PERSTEMPO and retention/turnover rates (McCloskey, 1999; RAND, 1998; Sticha et.al., 1999); unit readiness (Briscoe, 1999; Castro and Adler, 1999a; Pritchett, 1998); unit cohesion (Castro, 1999); individual mental health (Alderks, 1998; Castro and Adler, 1999a; Castro and Adler, 1999b; Castro, 1999); family (Adler and Golembe, 1999); and quality of life (Sticha et.al., 1999). Although the U.S. literature is insightful and illuminates areas of inquiry that should be explored in the Canadian context, there are many institutional differences that make it difficult to apply the American findings directly to the Canadian situation.   Methodological differences in the definition of PERSTEMPO between the Canadian and American military also exacerbate this

difficulty. Furthermore, whereas the American military tends to examine PERSTEMPO in compartmentalized parts, the scope of the Canadian PERSTEMPO project is CF-wide and aims to measure and understand the impacts of PERSTEMPO in all environments (Army, Navy, and Air Force).

4.0 DEFINITION OF PERSTEMPO

7.   The term PERSTEMPO refers to the sum of the demands made by military service upon individual members (deployment load, time away, and workload). For the purposes of this study, the operational definition of PERSTEMPO is the cumulative total of the deployment load or the tempo of CF operations (OPTEMPO), the time away a service member spends away from home for more than twenty-four hours/overnight, and general workload (garrison load). As such, it can be represented by the following (Flemming, 2000):

<u>PERSTEMPO =</u>
<u>Deployment Load</u>
Deployed participation in, or support to, a mission or duty tour for: UN, NATO, NORAD, Special Alliance Operations (i.e.: Gulf War), Alliance Commitments, Operational Sailing, Remote Unaccompanied Postings (i.e.: Alert), Aid to Civil Power, Humanitarian Aid, Disaster Relief, **plus** the Duration, Frequency, Intensity of Deployments and their associated Risk/Danger.

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<u>Time Away</u>
All non-deployment absence from home MORE THAN 24hrs/overnight (i.e.: TD, Collective Training, Individual Training, Exercises, Routine Sailing, etc.).

\+

<u>Garrison or Home Station Load</u>
Hours of work and the intensity of work in non-operational circumstances.

8.   Much anecdotal evidence has indicated that the increase in PERSTEMPO in the CF has had numerous impacts. The PERSTEMPO and HDDS is an attempt to define, measure, and

understand the impacts that PERSTEMPO has had on the CF, its members and their families. It has been hypothesised that PERSTEMPO has institutional, personal and familial impacts.

9.   The analysis of CF member input provided in this report represents one component of the PERSTEMPO research project. Along with these findings, focus group and interview data was gathered from 107 service providers across Canada and at international deployment locations: Bosnia, Eritrea, Kosovo, Golan Heights, and the Arabian Sea (see Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, 2004 for a summary of findings). In addition, six distinct survey instruments have been designed to capture the full impact of PERSTEMPO. These surveys have been and will be administered to: CF members employed domestically; deployed CF members; CF service providers; spouses of CF members; former CF members; and CF Reservists. The first survey (CF members employed domestically) was administered in April of 2002 to more than 11,000 CF members. The second survey (for deployed CF members) was administered in the fall of 2002 to approximately 3100 members at different CF deployment sites. Preliminary data on these two surveys will be available in late 2003 – beginning of 2004. The remaining four surveys will be administered in Canada throughout 2003-2005.

10.   The objective of these instruments is to: establish rigorous baselines for understanding the full impact of PERSTEMPO and the demands made by military service on CF members and their loved ones; provide strategic policy guidance in HR domains; provide a quantitative portrayal of the impacts of the past decade; identify an optimum PERSTEMPO rate; identify an optimum respite period between tours; and to articulate the views of personnel on what they believe is a healthy PERSTEMPO rate.

5.0 AIM

11.   This project report provides a view of PERSTEMPO and the human dimensions of deployments from the perspective of CF members. What follows is a discussion of members' perceptions of, and recommendations regarding PERSTEMPO in the CF. **Although they are based on a large sample, the qualitative results cannot be generalized to the entire CF**

population. The objective of this phase was to capture the views of the participants, correct or misinformed as they may be, and present them in a clear manner. This project report represents a significant milestone in the research study and the completion of the qualitative phase of the study. The themes and issues discussed herein have been used to generate survey questions that will be used in the quantitative stage of the PERSTEMPO and Human Dimensions of Deployments Study.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

12.   The analysis presented in this report is based on focus group data (see Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Miller, 1991) collected from 214 focus groups with 2136 members during site visits to 17 Canadian Forces Bases/Wings/Units (Alert, Yellowknife, Kingston, Saint-Jean, Borden, Halifax, Esquimalt, Petawawa, Edmonton, Valcartier, Shearwater, Bagotville, Comox, Winnipeg, Trenton, Greenwood, and Cold Lake) and five international sites (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Golan Heights, CF Europe, Arabian Gulf, and Eritrea) throughout 2001. These locations were selected in order to have input from the Army, Navy and Air Force. The objective of these focus groups was threefold: first, to gain an understanding of CF members' PERSTEMPO; second, to gain insight into CF members' perspectives on PERSTEMPO in the CF; and finally, to understand the impacts of PERSTEMPO on members, their loved ones and the organization.

13.   Strategies for acquiring volunteer participants in the focus groups varied considerably across the above locations. Well in advance of every site visit within Canada, a local OPI was established. In most cases a PSO, Padre, or CF Social Worker was recruited to "advertise" the forthcoming visit among Base units and personnel. They were asked to seek representation from across the units in that location, and to seek to ensure every demographic group was well represented (including rank (junior/senior officer and junior/senior NCM), sex, primary language, and environment). This breakdown allowed the researchers to determine if there were major differences in what the different groups were reporting. Nearly all participants had a minimum of one deployment throughout their careers. There was also a wide range of military occupation classifications (MOCs) represented in the groups. Moreover, there were people in the groups

with different levels of years of experience and who had experienced multiple deployments. Unless specified, the themes throughout the report did not vary across the demographic groups. In advance of the visits to international sites, the DCDS ensured a local OPI was tasked with local coordination. While the same guidance as above was provided to these officers regarding the recruitment of volunteers for the focus groups, the exigencies of service in these areas meant that the constitution of the groups was less representative of the site population than was the case within Canada. However, the analysts supplemented their group facilitations with frequent ad hoc interviews of personnel in informal settings and our confidence in the findings is high.

14.   **Focus Group Procedure:**   Military and civilian (both DND and privately contracted) researchers conducted the focus group sessions. An open-ended interview protocol was designed (see Annex A) to facilitate the focus groups and probes were used as required to gain further insight into topics being discussed. Each focus group opened with introductions, an overview of the purpose of the project, and an assurance of anonymity in reference to individual opinions. It was made clear to the participants that this was an opportunity for them to share their perceptions, experiences, and/or concerns in relation to PERSTEMPO and its impacts. Participation in the focus groups was voluntary, and the groups generally took place in classrooms/conference rooms across CF bases. The majority of the participants discussed issues and concerns openly without much probing. Although some CF members were cynical about the outcome of the project (i.e. they did not believe that any change would result from the discussions), the vast majority expressed satisfaction with the opportunity to speak freely about the issues.

7.0 CF MEMBER FINDINGS

15.   In all of the focus groups conducted, members consistently identified personnel, equipment and resources, as well as DND's budget as either the main drivers of the CF's current pace of operations or as their main source of frustration. The following sub-sections summarize the main themes that emerged in these discussions.

16.   **Personnel:**   The number of personnel currently serving in the CF was identified as the greatest issue facing the CF. One participant summarized it as follows: "*There's a manning crisis going on and they don't know where to start. Start by doing something like investing in the CF*". It was consistently argued, in all focus groups, that the amount of time members spend away from home as a result of CF commitments (overseas deployments, taskings, courses, training, etc.), could be drastically reduced by increasing the number of serving members. The current level of work seems to have inspired member created mottos of the CF, for example: "*Just enough, just in time, make it happen*", and "*Navy: There's no Life. Like it.*"   This is in stark contrast with the military Human Resource (HR) principle of "putting people first", which states that "The motivation, commitment and expertise of people are essential to the operational effectiveness of the CF" (DND, 2002: 4). At the moment, CF members feel that they are doing: "*More with less until [they] can do nothing*".   There is an overwhelming feeling that this tempo cannot be maintained over an extended period of time without serious repercussions. Some of these repercussions, according to members, include: an increase in member burnout; increase in overall stress; increase in physical and mental fatigue; increase in frustration; increase in attrition; and an increase in family problems. The following quotations illustrate the prevalent view that the CF is operating at an unsustainable pace, and reflect the range of suggestions and comments made by CF members:

>   "*Little taskings are not too bad, but serious taskings when sending 1,500-2,000 soldiers at a time, we don't have the manpower for it. Either give us the manpower or less responsibility*".

>   "*The only solution at the moment, the only thing we can do to get back on track is to shut down the CF for five years so we can re-build it*".

>   "*We will have to stop doing tours soon, there's nobody to do them. People [the new ones] are just not trained and experienced enough yet*".

17.   Apart from concerns surrounding health and well-being (which will be discussed in another section), members reported that the CF's current personnel levels are impacting morale and operational effectiveness. Many argued that the number of last minute attachments or

augmentees[2] being utilized to meet personnel requirements in operations were problematic for reasons surrounding unit cohesion and effectiveness, and were also symbolic of the CF's personnel problems. Members stated that although augmentees were becoming more common to meet operational requirements, they were still either deploying or sailing short of personnel resulting in some members having to waive their 60 day deployment respite period in order to re-deploy or to participate in training exercises. In cases where operational numbers could not be attained, these shortages often led to heavy in-theatre workloads. Members reported that:

> *"People have so many jobs they don't know where to start. You take them by the hand and say, 'start here'".*

> *"We really feel it when we sail 10 people short. You can imagine how we feel when the numbers are higher".*

> *"The organisation is too thin. It's the same people deploying over and over again".*

18.   **Equipment and Resources**: Discussions concerning the shortage of personnel in the CF were accompanied by long discussions surrounding the state of the department's military equipment. A major area of concern for members was that the equipment they were required to operate or use in their duties was antiquated. Members generally believed that the CF's material resources were not sufficient, and that this was increasing their workload as a result of having to do extra maintenance work and repairs. It was believed that this time spent doing maintenance and repairs was well over and above their normal duties. Many went so far as to state that their recent pay raises would have been better spent on equipment purchases and upgrades, which would result in an increase in morale. In their words:

> *"We would give up pay raises for more resources. People join the military to be a part of something, to feel a sense of family. They want a family effect. Well, when you have no resources and everybody is leaving because of it, you feel disappointed by your family. Your family is essentially not giving you the tools to grow-up, to make you all that you*

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[2] For the purposes of this report, augmentee refers to an individual who is deployed with a unit other than his or her own. Common concerns voiced by this group include: lack of support; difficulty getting information prior to the deployment; and, difficulty integrating into the group.

can be. I don't want to do a half-assed job, I want to do a good job and feel like I am a part of something that is bigger than I am".

"Pay raises would be better spent on equipment. They just shoot money at the problems. That's not what we need, we need the basics".

19.   Members often expressed frustration and embarrassment at the lack of proper resources. They further explained that it was difficult to take pride in their work when they were constantly grappling with ways to make equipment work at a low cost. The range of concern with respect to this issue varied from concern with equipment safety, to embarrassment by the state of the CF's equipment and resources.   Members who had recently returned from an overseas deployment often stated that a significant source of dissatisfaction and a large part of their time during their deployment was spent dealing with old equipment.   This was said to be very embarrassing when in the presence of international counterparts:

"Old equipment is demoralizing for members, it's embarrassing when you are among international peers. We were very embarrassed, the equipment was old and falling apart. How can you do a job? We were the laughing stock".

"Getting this ship ready to sail, the work involved, well lets just say it looked like a construction site".

20.   **Budget:** Equipment and personnel are monetary issues, therefore, it is not surprising that members were not satisfied with the department's current budget.   Above the specifics of equipment and resources, members reported being tired of having to "*nickel and dime*" everything and not having the proper funds to attain organisational objectives.   One member summed this up as follows:

"It never fails, no matter what we do, you have to fight for things on every trip. Whether it be services, personnel, etc., it's non-stop problems and bickering. Who pays for this, who pays for that. Not enough of this, not enough of that ".

21.   It was commonly heard that the CF operates too much like a private sector business and thus, was cutting too many corners in order to save money. Members expressed the view that if they wanted to be employed in a private sector company such as Bombardier, they would have

applied there and not with the CF. In sum, members generally reported that they wanted to be in the CF, but that the CF needs to be run like a military organisation and not a cost-saving business. Examples of this concern are:

> *"Everything is about money, how much fuel consumption, how much this, how much that. Do you want a military? Or do you want another IBM or something? Wake-up, it takes and costs money to have a military, stop running it like a business. We should be accountable for what is spent, but we can't keep on cutting corners and not re-equipping ourselves, it defeats the purpose. The politicians need to decide, should we have a military and if yes, support it, invest in it".*

> *"This is not a business but it sure is run like one. You want a job done, fine, we all joined for a reason, to do what military people do. Start treating us and funding us like a military should be, maybe then we could actually do something properly".*

22.   Members also reported dissatisfaction with the way in which budgets are spent. It was argued that not being able to carry over money (in realistic amounts) was problematic in that it led to "*wasteful spending*" at the end of each fiscal year. Members were frustrated by being told to be fiscally conservative throughout the year, and having to put projects and acquisitions on hold, and then having to turn around and spend their budgets unnecessarily at the end of the year, when instead, they could have used the money more wisely throughout the following fiscal year. Many had the feeling that if they were being cost-effective throughout the year, they would be punished at the end:

> *"Don't spend, don't spend, then the end of the year comes and you spend, spend, spend and waste, waste, waste. Why can't we carry over the left-over money we managed to save and actually make wise purchases? It's almost like being punished for being cost effective. You have left-over, well then, let's slash next years budget".*

23.   Members believed that increasing the budget would lead to more personnel and resources, a reduction in their current workload, less time away, and would increase morale and retention. Overall, it was stated that DND's budget should be increased and spent wisely. For example, one member recommended:

> *"Increase the budget. If we have more people, more equipment and better overall resources we will attract people and people will also be more satisfied. People might*

actually start to talk about the CF in a good way and thus you might increase recruitment and retention".

7.1 Time Away and Workload

24.   Throughout the focus groups, members reported that they generally enjoyed working in the CF, however, they vehemently emphasised that they were growing tired of constantly *"doing more with less"*. Similar to recent attrition focus group findings (Dunn & Morrow, 2002) and service provider interviews (Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, 2004), members consistently expressed that their workloads were heavy, and that primary duties, coupled with secondary duties and a high deployment tempo were leading to some members feeling burnt out or tired and to others leaving the CF. The consensus amongst members was that there were too many tasks and demands being placed on the CF and that there were not enough resources and personnel to carry them out. For example, it was pointed out that:

> *"You go away for six months, come back, have to take a refresher course, do maintenance, do rounds, it never ends".*
>
> *"It takes five years to train someone in my MOC and at the moment we have 27, problem is we need 80".*

25.   Interestingly, members highlighted that their work tempo should not only be measured by time spent at work, but should also include what they do during that time. Members frequently reported that while the tempo of work was up, the intensity of that work was down. Members expressed dissatisfaction in having a high tempo in their secondary taskings (admin taskings, paper pushing, etc.) and a low tempo in their primary occupation (field/sea/air exercises, MOC training,etc.). Some members went as far as to say that: "*People are doing all kinds of taskings they shouldn't be doing*". Many participants said that their primary reason for joining the CF - as a sailor, soldier, or airman/woman - was to be engaged in challenging and highly specialized work that was different from civilian society. This imbalance between primary and secondary taskings, has led many to re-evaluate their reasons for joining the Regular Force.

26.   **Time Away:** When discussing the amount of time spent away from home, members were of mixed opinion in relation to whether or not they were spending too much time away. While members frequently stated that they wanted to deploy on meaningful operations, and that they wanted to be engaged in challenging training, this was not to the extent that they were currently doing so. It was common to hear comments such as: "*This is my third six-month deployment in three years*". Many reported missing important career courses, family time, etc., as a result of being away. Many also believed that the time they spent away from home prior to deploying could have been better spent (i.e, they felt that there was duplication in training, etc.). While some claimed that they were constantly away from home, others argued that they have tried everything to be deployed with no success (this is discussed further in another section). Although the majority of participants reported often being away (deployments, training exercises, etc.), it was the unexpected taskings, which they found to be the most problematic for themselves and their families. Overall, members strongly believed that an increase in personnel was required to reduce the amount of time they were spending away from home. In their words:

> "*We are deploying way too much, its really screwing things up. People are leaving, they're tired, they're sick, you name it*".

> "*Its fine to deploy us, nobody here disagrees with that, but don't stack the deployments*".

> "*Here's our ship's schedule so stick to it. Don't send us on another ship. We will sail with ours, but it's the unexpected that kills us. They are the ones that destroy the families. They take a body here, take a body there to fill positions*".

27.   **Time Away and Planning:** It was commonly heard throughout the focus groups that "*sailors like to sail*", the army "*likes to deploy*" and airstaff "*like to fly*". As previously mentioned, however, what many found problematic when discussing time away from home (deployments, exercises, etc.), was the frequency and the uncertainty (or unexpectedness) of time away. They stated:

> "*You can't plan anything. Before you had an idea of what was happening six months ahead of time, you knew you would be away so you could plan for it. Today, it's all up in the air*".

28.   Members consistently stated that one of the most frustrating aspects of the frequency and uncertainty of time away was how much "*last minute planning*" was occurring. There was a consensus that the CF needed to be more creative and become stronger in the area of planning. While it was acknowledged that some events are unpredictable (ice storm, floods, etc.) and require last minute decisions, it was generally believed that the planning of regular deployments (such as Bosnia, Persian Gulf, etc.) needed improvement. Members generally believed that blaming shortages in personnel and resources was a poor excuse for lack of planning. Many identified communication breakdowns within the chain of command as a cause of improper planning and last minute decisions. Members comments in this area included: the following:

> *"They never plan properly, they never look a month or two ahead of time. Then the dockyard goes 24 hours a day trying to get everything together and everyone qualified. There's a huge lack of planning. Piss poor administration is the problem. Everything happens at the last minute".*

> *"Nothing is worse than a four day notice that you are going. If there was a war, fine. But that's not the case. For some trips we get a message saying critical manning, we gotta go. There's not much notice time and that really screws things up at home".*

29.   **Time Away and Training**: In relation to time away, members from all environments expressed that non-deployment related time away also has a major impact on them and their loved ones.   Many members who had recently returned from a deployment or who were deployed at the time of this study, expressed frustration with having career courses, training exercises, etc., scheduled shortly after their return to Canada.   They argued that the pre-deployment training (two-three months duration), plus their tour length (six months), plus the time they would have to spend on course or training throughout the remainder of the year upon their return, was in some cases beyond the coping abilities of their families (see also Dunn & Morrow, 2002). Many expressed that it was also leading to an over-extended and tired CF.

30.   Although members from all environments shared these concerns, focus group participants from the Navy were very vocal about having to take career and/or technical courses on the coast they were not posted at. This was especially problematic if they had recently returned from a deployment. Again, issues surrounding separation from loved ones emerged. One West Coast sailor summarized it as follows:

"You should have training on both Coasts. You come back from a deployment, go to Halifax (East Coast) for six months, get promoted, and then you're back on a ship off to sea. No down time at all".

31.   **Workload and E-Mail:** When discussing technology, members commented on the fact that e-mail was increasing their workload. It was stated that e-mail was creating information overload and has led to the proliferation of business procedures. Common complaints on this issue ranged from it being too easy to task people through e-mail to the amount of wasted time receiving multiple e-mails on the same topic. The most common complaint was that it made the work environment impersonal:

> *"Email communication goes too quickly. There are too many people involved. I sit in my office and constantly see a flashing light. Not everything is important, yet everyone thinks everyone needs to know about it. This increases workload, and distracts me from more important tasks".*

32.   **Nominal Rolls and Workload**: A major source of frustration for members was that the CF keeps members with medical conditions and/or who are on different types of leave (i.e., stress leave) on nominal rolls. It was consistently argued that this was problematic since taskings are not based on the actual number of personnel who could perform these tasks. It was common to hear that this was leading to an increase in workload since members were consistently required to pick-up taskings for others who were away on sick leave, stress leave, etc. It was reported that in some cases, keeping these members "*on the books*" was leading to resentment despite the fact that they had legitimate reasons to be away from work. It was generally believed that members who were not "*operational or functional*" should be kept on a separate list thus resulting in top-down taskings being more realistic. Members affirmed:

> *"I've never seen so many [sick] leaves being given in my career. Get them off the nominal roll, they are taking up positions we need".*

> *"We hold the 'unfit sea' people on the books too long. Put them on the medical books instead of ours".*

33.   **Taking Work Home**:   Another aspect of workload was that many reported working at home during evenings, weekends and while on leave. Similar to Service Provider findings (Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, 2004), it was common to hear that there were not enough hours in a day to complete taskings, therefore requiring members to spend an increasing amount of time "*catching-up*" outside regular work hours. Members reported that in some cases, having to work at home was leading to frustration and/or was impacting on their ability to spend quality time with their families. It was frequently argued that technology (e-mail, cellular telephones, etc.) was leading to limited "downtime" since members were more often than not easily accessible. Members also reported that their superiors had to take a more active role in prioritizing taskings, arguing that not every task is a priority. Members claimed that it was often difficult for them to say no to their bosses.

> *"Can I really say no to the boss? It is difficult to say no. It is not in our culture. For example, when the boss hands me a job on Friday that is due Monday, and says it is an emergency, I feel I can't say no. If I say no, the boss would look at me like I can't take the stress and manage the workload. I could never say, 'sorry Boss, this is not a priority for me'."*

> *"I want personal time on weekends, for example, but know the workload will be double if I don't come into work before Monday".*

7.2 Downtime and Leave

34.   **Downtime:**   The underlying theme throughout the focus groups was that the time that members are expected to spend away from their home (on exercises, courses, etc.), combined with their workload and deployment load, was too much. Although members reported that they wanted to be challenged, they generally expressed a need for a better balance between their workload and downtime. "*We need to be fair here, there are a lot of burn-outs going on. We need more downtime*". Many reported that the current pace of operations was physically and mentally tiring them out. Those who had recently returned from a deployment, were deployed or were preparing to deploy, argued that the whole experience of deploying was fatiguing, let alone the thought of watching some of their colleagues re-deploy within a short period upon their return (back to back deployments and/or deployments within the one year respite period). The following comments reflect the types of comments members made about their deployment experience:

"You go from low readiness, to high readiness and now you're ready to go on an operation but it's not that easy. Everyone has to have their weapon certifications, do your work-ups, training falls behind and then you got to catch up again. Outside agencies come to assess us. You go go go. It was jammed. In the end, yes we're ready to go but now the guys are burnt. Once all is done, now everyone has to catch up on the paper work side of things. All your administration has to be done"

"Some days, we're awake and working 20-22 hrs".

35.   Throughout the discussions it was common to hear members argue that there needs to be more time between deployments for individual members, especially if the CF plans on continuing to deploy at its current rate. Members commented that given the workload in operational theatres, it is not a place one would want to be if they are fatigued. Members argued that it is at this point that leadership needs to step-in and make decisions that do not support the "can do" motto (see leadership section for further discussion). It is believed that leaders do not often turn down taskings, since it could reflect poorly on their leadership abilities. There were, however, some exceptions:

"Guys should not be touched for a certain period of time [after a deployment]. There was one colonel who turned down two exercises after a six-month tour. He went out on a limb to stand up for the unit".

36.   **Annual Leave:** There were many discussions surrounding annual leave and leave while deployed (discussed in the deployment section) throughout the focus groups. In relation to annual leave, members often expressed not having the time to take their annual allotment as a result of the CF's deployment load, courses, training schedules, etc. One member who has an annual allotment of five weeks summed it up as follows:

"Five weeks holiday is a problem at the moment because people can't take five weeks off. Deploy, come back, go on course for five-six months, when do you fit it in? These benefits are great but in reality, when can you use up this time? When's the work going to be done? Answer is people will have to work while on leave".

37.   It was frequently reported that while members were officially filling out their leave forms, they were not taking it. Many participants claimed that a growing trend across the CF was for members to take their leave on paper, while in fact taking very little time off. Although it was

reported that they did not mind working, great frustration was expressed because members could not accumulate leave (the exception being those in operational roles who can accumulate five days per year and a maximum of 25 throughout their careers). The current policy of not being able to accumulate leave was described as a "*huge problem*" that was "*hurting morale*". Although members understood the importance of taking leave for their well-being, members were growing frustrated by not having the choice but to work during leave, since the government was not willing to increase personnel levels to reflect CF work requirements. They stated:

> *"There's no time for leave. We have to prepare PER's, do this, do that. We come in while on leave all the time. How else can you do everything?"*

> *"Manning is the goddamn problem. My wife and I have been married for eight years. Do you think we can plan a holiday? She can plan a holiday, but we can't. There's not enough people around for us to have that option, your MOC is short, your MOC is short. You gotta sail".*

38.   Throughout the focus groups, members suggested that given the current workload throughout the CF, they should be entitled to carry-over a portion of their annual entitlements. Members stated that they understood the organizational and salary inflation implications of accumulated leave, however, they generally believed that they should be able to carry over a maximum of five days annually. This was a big source of frustration:

> *"The inability to accumulate leave is a kicker, at least let us get paid out for it. People on leave always come into work to finish tasks etc. and never get compensated for it. At least let us carry over five days or something".*

> *"Leave is a problem. Pre-deployment leave, personal leave…you never get it, but you have to burn it off. Nothing like being ordered to take your leave when your family is unavailable, why not let us carry some over?"*

39.   Another source of frustration surrounding annual leave concerned assessment factors in the evaluation process. There was a feeling, even among members who had deployed or spent time away from their families, that if they did not perform volunteer functions throughout the year, they would be at a disadvantage come evaluation time. Some argued that during their leave, they had no choice but to volunteer in order to get the extra evaluation credits:

> *"Doing our job is no longer the only thing that counts. Now, in your spare time, you should be volunteering etc. because it looks good in your PER. Give us a break".*

40.   **Duty Watch:** An added point of contention and a major dissatisfier for members of the Navy was the requirement to report to work for "duty watch" if the member was not taking more than ten consecutive days of annual leave. Members reported that this forced them to often take a minimum of ten consecutive days if they "*totally*" wanted to escape work. Members also stated that in some cases this was causing family problems since spouses/partners were questioning why members had to report to work when they were on leave:

> *"My wife is pissed when I have to do watches etc. while on leave. They should lock-up the ships and leave us the hell alone. Either that or have two crews per ship to pick-up the workload. People are leaving because of all the time away, and because when you do get a break you can't take it because you have to do this, or do that. Replenish our bodies because its screwing morale".*

> *"Close the boats down when we are in port. Lock them up. You have this mentality of 'back when I was a sailor we had to do watch'. Welcome to the millennium boys, close them down. Its just an old mentality thing that no longer makes sense. We should not be doing duty watch after hours. Get a commissionaire to do it or lock up the ships. It's even worse when you are on leave and have to come into work to do your watch".*

7.3 Deployments

41.   Similar to attrition focus group findings (Dunn and Morrow, 2002), many believed the time spent in pre-deployment training was too long and took away valuable time that could be spent with their families prior to deploying. Members enjoyed being deployed, however (as will be discussed in a later section), some believed most of the operations they were engaged in were or had become "*meaningless*". Members reported that it was becoming increasingly difficult for them to justify to their families and themselves why they were being deployed to locations they felt lacked a sense of purpose and/or to locations where they had previously deployed to (especially when they found themselves doing the same work as they did in a previous deployment). Throughout the discussions, some members identified that there was a need to better educate CF members and their families about the history and reasons behind the CF continually deploying to certain areas (Bosnia, Persian Gulf, etc.) in order for everyone to understand why they were there and why their involvement was important:

"Families must see the value of the deployments. What we are getting into now is 'Balkan Boredom'. We need to be able to justify why we are deploying. We need to justify to our wives why we are sitting on our asses when we are deployed".

42.   The most common problems identified with deployments were related to notification time and re-integration time. Members, especially those who have deployed as augmentees, generally believed that they should be accorded more re-integration time/downtime upon returning from a deployment in order to re-integrate themselves into their families and work. Members who had deployed as augmentees argued that their "downtime" was often short-lived as a result of often returning to a unit or ship that was gearing up for a deployment. It was generally believed that:

"Augmentees are not supported. They really get the shaft, there's no consistency in dealing with them. They are seen as just filling a position".

43.   In relation to notification time, members argued that a policy identifying a minimum period of notification for scheduled deployments and exercises is urgently required. Although it was reported that there are circumstances that require short notification time to deploy, the majority of the time this is seen as the result of a lack of organization and coordination by the CF. It was also argued that members who are required to deploy on short notification time as a result of personnel shortages, should be compensated. One member summed this up as follows:

"We need a policy on notification time, whether it be three days or whatever, anything will do. Things happen, things need to be prepared, if you have a life outside the ship you have to make arrangements. They give you short notice and then if you can't make the proper arrangements its in your PER. Give us some time to find solutions. The Navy is real bad for this. If war breaks out, lets go, drop everything and go, go, go. Exercises, fine, lets go, but tell me when and for how long".

44.   **Meaningful Operations/Sense of Accomplishment**:   One of the greatest sources of frustration expressed by members was that they did not have a sense of accomplishment in the work they were currently doing. Although members reported having heavy workloads, they often felt that their work lacked a sense of purpose and that current well established operations were not meaningful. Although they preferred to be "*busy rather than bored*", there was a general feeling that the CF was just "*keeping them busy*" by assigning mundane tasks. "*I'm happy going to sea, but not with what I do while I am at sea*". Members expressed a desire and need to engage in

meaningful operations; that is, operations that require their skill sets and that involve more than peacekeeping functions. It was common to hear members refer to themselves in their current functions as "*social workers*", "*police officers*", and "*political pawns*":

> "*We do a lot of stupid trips. We've been to Asia four times to try and increase Canada's economy. We have cocktail parties and waive the flag. In the meantime, you have a crew that is bored stiff*".

> "*We do way too many goodwill visits, we're pawns. There's absolutely no sense of accomplishment. Your family worries for nothing...I'm bored...why are we doing all these things?*"

> "*The floods and ice storm, they were great. You had a real sense of accomplishment*".

45.   **Motivation to Deploy:** Army and Navy personnel often commented on how regular deployments such as Bosnia and the Persian Gulf have become boring and uneventful. When asked what motivated them to deploy to such areas, the initial response was normally for financial gain (especially when going more than once since operational allowances increased). When further probed, however, many members indicated that their original reasons for wanting to deploy were: for adventure; for the challenge; to perform meaningful work; to make a difference in the world; for a chance to use military skills; and so forth. Members who had deployed to areas such as Bosnia and the Persian Gulf stated that these reasons became less important in their second tour or if they were asked to re-deploy to those areas since they had already been there and knew that there was little adventure, little challenge, the work was not as meaningful as they thought it would be. More importantly, they did not feel that they were putting to use their military skills (apart from the odd exercise). Army participants expressed the most satisfaction with ROTO 0s and ROTO 1s since it was during these types of rotations (these are the earliest stages of the mission) where they felt their skills sets were best utilized:

> "*We are doing the wrong types of deployments. On ROTO 0 or 1 we are very busy. We do what we are supposed to do. As for the rest, we need to examine why we are there.*"

46.   Common reasons given for unwillingness to deploy included: family responsibilities; the members age/stage of life; and, other personal reasons (mental and physical health reasons). The most common reason given, however, was high PERSTEMPO in the form of time away (TD,

exercises, courses, etc.) and deployment load (had recently returned from a deployment or had already been to the deployment location).

47.   Conversely, it is interesting to note that a number of personnel indicated that they wanted to deploy but were being refused. "A lot of people want to deploy but aren't allowed to. Why not is my question". For these members, there was a general feeling of frustration with constantly hearing that the CF is over-extended yet they were not able to assist in reducing the deployment load of their colleagues. Members who had deployed argued that there was often no legitimate reason for excluding those who were volunteering to deploy, except for a lack of flexibility in the system and people being impaired by "tunnel vision". Members argued that in operational areas such as Bosnia (a well-established operation), basic soldiering skills were more than sufficient to be able to perform day-to–day functions. In these discussions, it was suggested that the CF should encourage cross-training individuals in order for more people to be able to deploy. One member clarified this need for flexibility:

> *"They would rather see someone leave than to cross-train them. Why not be open, why not allow more room for occupational transfers. Instead we shoot ourselves in the foot. We do not give people good options. We lose so many people because of this. There's no lateral movement. It only takes nine-twelve months to teach someone the basics. We need more flexibility in the system".*

48.   **<u>Acting While So Employed (AWSE)</u>**:   Members (mainly from the Army) reported that one consequence of PERSTEMPO and lack of personnel was the number of members being asked to deploy AWSE (Acting While So Employed). Some reported that AWSE was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the member was being trusted to accomplish responsibilities of a higher rank and if done successfully would reflect well upon them, on the other hand, if the member did not perform well, they suffered career repercussions. For those who did do a good job, there were feelings of frustration when they returned to Canada at their original rank. Many expressed that if they or their colleagues were good enough and trusted enough to do the job in theatre, the same should apply upon their return. Those who deployed as AWSE argued that the pressure and responsibility put on them resulted in a sense of accomplishment during the mission, however, it sometimes led to bitterness at being able to perform at one level and then being demoted upon their return to Canada. Another source of frustration was the belief that some individuals were

made AWSE solely because some of their senior colleagues did not want to deploy. This frustration is summed up in the following member statements:

> *"They give me my pie and then took it away from me when I returned from deployment. They felt I was good enough to do a higher ranking job in theatre, but back here, they feel I'm not good enough to do the job. When I went to Bosnia, every person DAGGED red – they didn't want to go. They just needed to fill positions. Those who did go 'got hooks', but when we came back, they took them away".*

> *"If you are good enough to be Sgt. over there, you are good enough to be here".*

49.   Other concerns surrounding AWSE included that: the level of training and experience the member had was at times questionable; that there was too much pressure on members to do well while acting in a position; that there were sometimes a lack of trust in those deployed as AWSE; and that if the CF had the proper resources they would not be required to have members AWSE.

50.   **Navy Sea/Shore Ratio**: Navy personnel had mixed feelings in relation to the sea/shore posting ratio. While some were content in spending more time on sea takings, others felt that the ratio was too high in relation to the amount of time they were required to spend at sea with no shore time. A common theme that emerged for those who were dissatisfied with their sea/shore posting ratio (those spending too much time at sea), was that they "*needed a break*" from their high tempo routine. "*When you have a shore posting, you pretty much work eight to four pm. It's a much slower pace*". It was generally believed that shore postings gave members the opportunity to "*catch their breath*" and establish a regular routine. Some described shore postings as "*the dangling carrot*".

> *"The motto is go ,go, go until, if you're lucky, you get a shore posting".*

> *"I have 14 years in the service and 13 of them have been at sea".*

> *"There is no way the sea/shore ratio is 60/40. More like 90/10".*

51.   In general, Navy personnel believed that the Navy should be more conscious of how long members have spent at sea when determining who gets a shore posting. It was common to hear that while some members were "*itching*" to get a shore posting, others were just as anxious to be posted to sea:

"Many times a lot of us are happy to get out to sea because we get away from all the bullshit that goes on while in port".

"I've had eight years at sea with no shore time. Do you think they told me that when I first came in?"

52.   Given the ability of the Navy to rotate personnel between sea and shore postings, it was believed that finding the right balance between sea/shore taskings was a key element in maintaining a healthy and well-rested personnel strength. Members noted, however, that being posted to shore should not only be done when there is a course or course teaching requirement:

"When we go to shore it's usually to take a course or to teach a course. The ratios are really screwed up especially when you look at MOC".

"When you do get a shore posting, your head is in the books all the time".

"There's not a lot of opportunity for shore postings. It depends on billets and rank. You always end up at fleet school in Halifax. Teaching takes a lot of time, its not a break".

53.   **Ideal Tour length and Number of Deployments:** Similar to focus group discussions with service providers (Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, 2004), members expressed various perspectives when asked to comment on what they perceived to be the ideal deployment length and deployment frequency. While a minority of personnel suggested that deployments should last one year, the overwhelming sentiment was that six months is optimal. Those who argued for one-year deployments believed members would find more gratification in longer tour lengths since they would be able to see some of the "*results*" of their work. Although these members supported one-year deployments, they also acknowledged that this option would be problematic, especially when considering issues surrounding re-integration and family/partners.

"A year is a better tour. There would be fewer rotations. When you go on tour for six-seven months, the guys start something and don't care whether it's finished. If longer, the guys can do a job and see results".

"One year is ideal. The guys like to see the job finished, but it would be too hard on families".

54.   When discussing tour length, it was also frequently mentioned that shorter deployments (two or three months) was not the best "*route to take",* as it was believed that this would lead to

more frequent deployments and in the end, more time away. Members believed six months was ideal because it meant that they could: "*do it and get it over with*".

55.   Although members did not find the six-month tour length to be overly problematic (except for the boredom surrounding the nature of operations that they are currently engaged in), members consistently expressed concerns with current deployment policies and waivers. At present, a member is given a 60-day respite period upon return from a deployment and is not to be re-deployed within a one year period from his/her return. Many reported, however, that they were asked to waive these rights as a result of personnel shortages and a high deployment load. While some members argued that they have a right to waive their 60-day respite period and one year no deployment period, many believed this could lead to problems. It was often stated that one of the primary reasons for members signing these waivers (or being "asked" to), was personnel shortages and organizational commitments. As a result, many feared that the signing of waivers could become a "*new trend*" that would lead to members over-extending themselves and burning-out because the CF cannot maintain its current commitments. In this case, the signing of waivers (especially if not tracked properly) was seen as dangerous since it could lead to members' feeling that if they do not sign them, they could be faced with career repercussions. In general, it was stated over and over again that CF policies need to be realistic and practical, and to be such, either a substantial increase in personnel must occur or a substantial decrease in commitments needs to take place. Some members stated that at the moment, deployment related policies were not always practical since they came into conflict with career courses, exercises, etc:

> "*The 60 day no deployment policy: forget it. People will be told to waive it. They do it until they drop*".

> "*If they follow the guidelines, there is a certain amount of time that has to be given between tours. They have guidelines, but they never follow them*".

> "*You are supposed to not be deployable for at least a year*".

56.   In relation to the number of deployments throughout one's career, the majority of participants claimed that there was no magical number of tours and that it depended on a number of factors (nature of operations, time between deployments, family commitments, etc.). While members believed that some were more resilient than others, and could therefore probably cope

with more deployments, the consensus was that it was really an "*individual thing*". It is, however, critical that the CF know where to draw the line. As one member expressed: "*I hit the wall at my 6th tour*."

57.   **Deployments and Leave:**   Issues surrounding deployment and leave were also frequently discussed.   Prior to deploying, members stated that those involved in operation preparations were often expected to work while on leave.   It was also common to hear that members worked during their R&R's (Rest and Recreation) and/or HLTA's (Home Leave Travel Allowance) or were denied their HLTA as a result of personnel shortages. The following comments illustrate what members reported:

> *"You bite the bullet when it comes to Ops. People who do preparation work never get their leaves. You take your leave but end up working three days of it".*
>
> *"Leave, I wish I could get it. Take courses, take refresher courses, get ship ready to go, then they tell you to take forced leave. We had to use forced leave and most of us ended up having to work to get this ship ready to go. You can't bank anything, it might piss off the bean counters!"*
>
> *"We always use our R&R leave to get things done. Our R&R is work".*
>
> *"Those considered essential to the ship will not get their HLTA leave. It really sucks".*
>
> *"I can't get my leave on this deployment, there's nobody to fill my shoes".*

58.   **In-Theatre Communication Services**: Members generally believed that in-theatre communications with their homes have improved significantly over the years. For those who had a dedicated phone line (24 hours a day), they felt it increased morale since members were not as restricted in relation to when they could call home. E-mail services were also well received. As one member stated: "E-mail on ship is the best thing that has ever happened". Although the majority of members identified phone services and e-mail as a "*moral booster*", a small number believed that these services were at times problematic. These members believed that too much contact with families could be negative since the member was now aware of almost everything that was occurring at home, but felt powerless to do anything about it.

59.   **In-Theatre Educational Opportunities:** A common theme that emerged in many of the focus groups was that members wanted to have more in-theatre educational opportunities. While some suggested granting all members (regardless of rank) a minimum number of days per year to attain educational objectives (in Canada), many argued that personnel should be given courses during their spare time in-theatre. There was a sentiment that the CF has the internal resources through RMC (Royal Military College) to provide members with these types of in-theatre opportunities.

> *"Having university educated officers is fine, but it's an unrealistic demand for those who are already in...Train, work, go on exercise, deploy, when you do have time to study at the university level? Great bring in distance learning so we can learn from home. Now you're at home around your family and you still can't spend time with them. Work then study, work than study."*

> *"Give me schooling. We are overpaid for what we do in Canada. Yet, we will spend money on educating or recruiting new guys with university degrees, they are unknown commodities, invest in us first. You have to offer people already in the CF something. Why not invest in us or the lower ranks?".*

7.4 Training

60.   Personnel reported that two of the main consequences of today's PERSTEMPO was that some members were prematurely being deployed and/or being sent on courses that they were not experienced enough to take:

> *"They come to sea not prepared. They have cut courses to save money and in the meantime the young guys behind us feel like shit because they can't do their jobs. Their not getting the proper training and their bosses have to do their work. People are afraid to fail their courses... If you can't do it, you can't do it, that should be the philosophy. We will help you out and get you up and going. These new guys need time in the system and guidance, they need to be mentored. Don't give someone a qualification who shouldn't have one, its just plain dangerous. Unfortunately that's what happens when you do not have enough bodies".*

> *"People are afraid of going to some courses because they are not ready for them. All they are is a hard crash course and they do not want to fail them. They do not feel they are ready to take them yet".*

61.   While some are taking courses that may be too advanced for their level of experience, others are being deployed without the "*proper skill sets*". Many reported that junior personnel are

often not getting enough hands on training prior to deploying resulting in more experienced personnel having to constantly monitor them. Although members accepted that everyone at some point in their career has their "*first experience with deploying*", they argued that a shortage in training equipment, field and sea exercises, and the shortening of too many courses has led to a decline in basic on-the-job knowledge.

> *"We no longer have the same levels of training in some trades. When we trained, we had to qualify at sea, today, there is no on the job experience. We have been getting away with it but it will catch-up to us soon, something's going to happen sooner or later".*

> *"They learn it and then don't touch it. We need to teach them theory and application. The lack of equipment we have does not help, it hurts training, there's no hands on".*

62.   Another concern expressed by members was the amount of "*trainees*" or "*training billets*" being deployed to operational areas. Although members claimed that this was a good way of getting one "*up-to-speed*" in their occupation, they added that it can be difficult at the beginning stages of a deployment since "*trainees*" require extra attention and supervision during an already busy stage. This has led to great frustration, as indicated by some members:

> *"Another piss off factor is that we are currently in a high state of readiness and on route to the Persian Gulf and we have a whole shit load of training billets on board. This means that again we have to accommodate these people and people who are qualified and experienced and who should be on board are left behind".*

> *"We need experience. People are scared of their weapons, machines etc. We should not be doing weapons training in theatre".*

63.   A further source of frustration for many in relation to the impacts of PERSTEMPO on training was that the timing of courses were often in conflict with deployment dates. Some members reported that they had missed career courses as a result of having to deploy, while others reported that they had been called off course in order to deploy. In other cases, members claimed that they had to defer taking courses as a result of their garrison workload. Overall, many were becoming frustrated by constantly "*fighting to maintain old skills and learning new skills while attempting to integrate them*" with a lack of training as a result of PERSTEMPO. The following examples were given by Navy personnel:

"Courses and the ships schedule do not match. Courses are either at the same time as deployments or the deployment is in the middle of the course".

"A colleague had a 10 day course, and missed the last two because of deployments. Now he's not qualified to sail".

64.   Other comments concerning training included that: the deployment training was too long; the CF only trains for primary MOC, yet members are still responsible for other tasks (the use of computers, etc.); there was too much overlap in training when they do receive it (especially pre-deployment training for Bosnia); and there needs to be better and more extensive training in order to perform properly in their functions.

"They don't train us on the equipment we use and when you are being trained they tell you all of this stuff will be obsolete. What's the point? There is so much overlap in the training. Perhaps this is where costs can be cutback a little. We train here and then find ourselves in Kingston doing the exact same thing. Why?"

"We need better and more extensive training. We need to take care of our people, we need to teach people the proper skill sets. It's very difficult to go home and say 'I've done a good job today'". I manage a ten million dollar budget, yet no one has trained me to manage money".

7.5 Mental Health and Services

65.   On the whole, there was a sense that the increased operational tempo in the absence of necessary downtime was not sustainable. Participants stated that they and many of their colleagues were increasingly tired and stressed as a result of doing "*too much with too little, all of the time*". It was suggested that this was becoming increasingly problematic when they were being asked/tasked to deploy on operations that were no longer motivating and/or meaningful (Bosnia, Gulf, etc.) to them:

"Over the past 10 years, there's been increased stress, it's a real pressure cooker."

66.   When members were asked about mental health, their responses centred on the issue of stress. It was often suggested that stress in the CF can be very high, and can have tangible impacts on people. Stress was seen as a cumulative phenomenon, which had multiple impacts, including: frustration; burnout; sleep deprivation; higher deployment recovery time; etc. It was generally believed that it was not the type of deployments members were engaged in that was

causing problems, but their level of overall PERSTEMPO (deployment load, time away, and garrison workload). Again, it was believed that lack of downtime was the main cause of mental health problems. It was frequently reported that members were taking sick leave and/or stress leave in order to have time to rest and/or in order to cope with stress.

67.   **Medical Services**: Throughout the focus groups, members expressed dissatisfaction with CF medical services. Member's concerns ranged from a lack of continuity in service delivery to total mistrust with the medical community. Similar to survey findings from personnel serving in Kosovo and Macedonia (Dunn and Flemming, 2001), many members reported that they did not expect that they would be treated fairly or with compassion by the CF if an injury or trauma threatened their ability to perform their military duty. Many also held the belief that they were "*better off*" going to civilian doctors in order to get medical assistance, as illustrated in the following comments:

> "*If you have a severe injury, there's no way the CF will take care of you. Go to civvys, they treat you properly*".

68.   Of major concern for members was that continuity in services seldom occurred. The most consistent complaint in this area was that members rarely see the same doctor and that this often led to incomplete medical files and/or proper follow-up. "*They sometimes don't even log our shots, you have people getting poked who already have the required doses. Get a grip*". These discussions often led to members adding that they had completely lost confidence and trust in CF medical services. There was a widely held belief that doctors in the military are not as good as private sector doctors. Some members reported that they were so sceptical of CF services that they would wait until regular medical base hours ceased in order to see civilian physicians after hours. When further probed in this area, however, many members indicated that their concerns were not necessarily competency based, but had more to do with medical equipment and lack of continuity in service delivery. Members stated that:

> "*The doctors never have experience, they're always new ones and they come and go. The best ones are the civilian doctors but they won't deploy*".

> "*We have more confidence in the services offered on the American ships than in the CF services offered at home*".

69.   When discussing differences between the military and civilian medical systems, members often reported that it was important to remember that military physicians and medical personnel are military members themselves. As a result, there was a perception that the chain of command could influence medical opinion when there were personnel shortages for a deployment and/or a requirement for a member to be on exercise, etc. Many members felt that: "*Our bosses should not have the power to overrule specialists*".   Some members believed that given today's PERSTEMPO, recovery lengths were being shortened to meet operational demands.   Some members also reported that they were at times being taken off medical categories in order to be deployed. Members negatively perceived these types of events, stating that:

> *"I went to a civilian doctor for stitches after a surgery, he said 30 days until active. The military doctor thought that was too long, he said five days. Hey, wait a minute the difference between these two opinions is huge!".*

> *"I was taken off a temporary category so that they could deploy me".*

> *"You want to hear how screwed up the system is, I went for a doctors visit one day and found out that I was on a temporary category, here I am carrying sandbags all over the place and doing my thing and the whole time I'm classified as unfit field. Figure that one out. In the end, I was scared as hell because if you have two temporary categories you're out of the CF".*

70.   **Health Services at Sea:** Navy personnel who had deployed often commented on the lack of available fitness services available on ships. Given the Navy's current deployment tempo, it was argued that fitness and health services will become increasingly important. Members often expressed that the Navy's current ships are not equipped for members having a venue to vent frustration and/or deal with their stress. When members were asked how they coped with stress while at sea, common answers included: "*hold it in*"; "*snap in a corner once in a while*"; "*get drunk in port*"; "*exercise on ship*"; "*lash out here and there at people*"; and, "*sit on the upper decks*". The most common recommendations made by members for improving mental health and morale on ships was that physical fitness be attributed a higher priority, and that there should be medical staff of both genders as well a padre present on all ships.

> *"Design the ships with a room for a gym. Have a separate room".*

"There's no gear here for us to do that, there's no room. You do it in the hallways and everybody walks around you etc. Is PT not important in the military?"

71.   **Sick/Stress Leave**: A consequence of increased deployments and time away was that many questioned the legitimacy of some of their colleagues' illnesses. Common complaints included: members abusing the system; those requiring services did not have time to access them; that keeping "unfit" members on nominal rolls meant additional work for some people; and that the tempo was too high to take stress leave or personal time off.

"The guys who fuck the system use up all the medical services and the guys who need it don't get any type of services".

"We don't have time for services. We don't have time to take 30 day stress leave".

72.   Overall, it was suggested that although the granting of a 30 day stress leave period was at times appropriate, it was pointless if it was not accompanied by some type of educational or awareness training. More specifically, it was suggested that given today's PERSTEMPO, all CF members should be compelled to attend stress and/or a coping with stress course/workshop in order to be able to identify signs of stress (in themselves and colleagues). Members also argued that follow-ups with members on stress leave should be mandatory in order to monitor their progress so that they can deploy on the next rotation.

"The 30 day stress leave: it's a waste of time. Give them stress courses, do follow-ups, do something for them."

"We all need courses on how to deal with stress."

73.   **Awareness of Supervisors**: Another suggestion made by members was that those in supervisory positions needed to become more acquainted with their personnel. Members reported that this was one of the greatest obstacles in identifying who truly needed assistance and who did not. By not knowing their personnel, it was argued that the leadership often gets the "*wool pulled over their eyes*" by people who are constantly abusing the system, while those who are truly in need get denied.

"I asked to exchange ships for personal reasons. I was not asking to get out of a deployment, I love being at sea, I was asking to switch me to the next ship out. I get told no. My wife was pregnant and we ended up having a still-born, what the hell?"

"One of the major problems is that people do not know their people. If you're sick, you have to prove it because they are afraid you are getting away from something. They have no clue who the hard workers are and who the lazy ones are".

74.   On the other hand, however, there was also a sense that mental health issues, and in particular how they were being addressed within the CF, was undermining the rank structure of the organization. For example it was argued that: "*Soldiers are now going to the padres and social workers with their problems and bypassing the chain. This undermines authority.*" A common complaint voiced by members in supervisory roles was that supervisors were often left in the dark in relation to the status of their personnel and thus ultimately impacted their ability to make decisions, assist with the situation, and/or plan accordingly.

75.   **Stigma**: There were mixed feelings regarding the stigmatization of military members with mental health issues. While some members affirmed that: "*There's no stigma or label for using services*", others referred to individuals who used services as "*sick, lame, and lazy*"; "*unfit weapons*"; and "*MIR Commandos*" and so on. As indicated in service provider focus group findings on PERSTEMPO (Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, 2004), although these pejorative names and stigma seemed prevalent, they were normally more indicative of the CF's current workload, than actual negative sentiments towards those who experience problems. Members often argued that although member's who seek services and leave are labelled as such, they generally do not have problems with them as individuals unless they are abusing the system in order to get time off to rest and/or to avoid a deployment. However, there is also a commonly held perception that "*too many people take advantage of the services offered,*" thereby implying that not all people who utilize the services available really need them. For example, it was stated that: "*PTSD is real although it can be easily abused, some people have it and some people think they do.*" In sum, it was explained that labelling is often the result of an over-tasked workforce where resentment occurs because the already heavy workload is accrued when members are absent or ill. One member stated that:

> *"It gets to the point that when people are on sick or stress leave we end up getting bitter. There's too much going on".*

76.   **Fear of Repercussions:** As reported in service provider focus groups (Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, 2004), many CF members confirmed that there is a fear of career consequences when reporting personal problems and/or a medical condition. Although it was argued that the CF has become much more proactive in this area and that many supervisors' attitudes have changed, it was still common for members to report that they did not feel comfortable discussing issues with their colleagues, superiors, and/or service providers. The most common reason given for this discomfort was that members feared it would either appear in their PER or would result in some other informal career consequence. Some were so convinced that there would be career consequences that they admitted that they would not seek mental health services until they were at the end of their careers, a time when they knew they would not be impacted. Their motto was: "*You did this to me, now fix me*". There was also a widely held belief that the CF must always be placed above family commitments, as illustrated in the following quotation:

> "*Emergencies at home always happen but there's no support. The ship always comes first, if a problem happens, it's in your PER. No wonder nobody talks about things, it might come back and get you in your PER*".

77.   **Screening/Departure Assistance Group (DAG):** Focus group data revealed considerable cynicism in relation to the effectiveness of the CF's screening process in filling the ranks for deployments and evaluating the health of members upon their return. There was a common perception among CF members that many of their colleagues were abusing the system (DAG) to get out of deployments, and that it was too easy for them to manoeuvre around the system. They stated, for example, that:

> "*Some people are not deployable to come to Alert, but guess what, they suddenly are able to deploy to go to Bosnia!*"

> "*The system is just messed up. You have guys who try everything not to deploy...It's brutal sometimes the amount of energy people use to get away from going to sea*".

> "*The bottom line in the Navy and where many problems occur is that you have those who sail and those who do not*".

78.   Further probing into this area revealed that members would like to see a more "*hard-line*" approach in dealing with those who consistently manage to escape deploying. Suggestions on how to handle this ranged from the requirement to conduct follow-ups with these individuals to

releasing them from the CF. A common theme was that CF members who are not deployable, should not be employed by the CF. In their words:

> *"I support family life, but as much as I support family life, you're a soldier.*
> *If you are not deployable, you're are not employable".*

> *"Just because people don't want to go, that's not good enough. There are extenuating circumstances, e.g. a family member dying. It doesn't cut it that people don't want to go".*

79.   Similar to findings from service provider focus groups (Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, 2004), members expressed the need to improve the screening process/DAG, suggesting that it needed to be more consistent, and done properly. In some cases, members reported that they had never been DAGGED or that if a DAG process was in place, they were never asked or required to participate. In other cases, members who did attend were asked to have their spouse/partner present and other times spouse/partner presence was not requested. In relation to spousal/partner participation in the DAG process, the majority of participants believed that it was a good idea, however, there were some who argued against it. *"Don't include spouses in the DAG, none of us will be able to deploy if you do. Offer to have spouses present, don't force it".* Regardless of whether members were asked to participate in the DAG with or without their partners present, it was emphasized that DAG procedures needed to be standardized:

> *"My training was in June-July, we also trained in August, and deployed in September. We never did a proper DAG for this deployment. Everything got really congested. To my knowledge the DAG was not a part of the equation. How do you do a proper DAG when you have high turnover rates?"*

> *"The DAG is only effective when done properly. We got a screening sheet while at sea?".*

80.   There was also a common perception that some service providers were too lenient when screening members.

> *"Service providers are too lenient. They are patient advocates. They ask 'do you want to be at sea? No? Okay then'".*

81.   Aside from issues addressed above, many members asked: *"How can we afford to DAG people?"* There was a general feeling that given the CF's current deployment and workload, the CF was not in a position to lose any willing members. As mentioned in a previous sub-section

(stigma), members suggested that when some of their colleagues do DAG red, it creates frustration since it may lead to a ship or unit deploying short, ultimately resulting in an increase deployment workload for those affected.

82.   **Pre-Deployment Briefings:**   When discussing issues surrounding deployments, many commented on the quality of pre-deployment briefs. Concerns were expressed in relation to how the briefs were given, the content of the briefs, and some contemplated if they were even worthwhile having. Many members complained that, while the intention of the briefings was to alleviate concerns by informing and educating members and their loved ones, they often ended up creating new concerns:

> *"They have good intentions, but give me a break. We get a debrief before we leave, our families are present and all and they start talking about anthrax and stuff. They scared the shit out of everybody in that room, our families do not understand that stuff. So here we are, scared wives around us and they just dismiss us. Seems to us that the people who conducted this session just wanted a free flight to where we were. In the end, it was just another night where we couldn't spend time with our families and where we had to pay for babysitters and so forth. It was a real waste of time".*

> *"We had a de-brief and they talked mostly about the anthrax we needed. They scared the shit out of most people present, they never thought to use layman's terms".*

83.   Members consistently stated that these briefs should not be a "*check the box*" exercise. They suggested that briefings should be informative, given in simple English/French, and be standardized across the CF. They also argued that given the CF's current PERSTEMPO and deployment load, more effort and resources should be devoted to developing better pre-deployment briefs.

7.6 Family

84.   In many of the focus groups, members were hesitant to discuss the impacts that PERSTEMPO was having on their loved ones and family life. However, when members did speak out on this sensitive issue, it was clear through non-verbal cues (i.e. the nodding of heads, hand gestures, etc.), that many agreed with the serious nature of the discussions and could relate to the experiences of those who commented on the difficulties in their personal lives as a result of

their careers in the CF and PERSTEMPO. **The information and themes presented in this section are based on the comments made by members who chose to discuss family related issues.** It should be noted that the themes that emerged from these discussions will be used in future survey instruments in order to further understand the impacts PERSTEMPO is having on loved ones and family life.

85.   In general, it was common throughout family-related discussions to hear that some were experiencing difficulties maintaining or establishing meaningful relationships as a result of their workload and time away. Members with families (spouse/partner and children)[3] expressed that their families are "*often lost in the shuffle*". Problems within families were commonly linked to time away on exercises and deployments. These included feeling like a stranger upon returning home from a deployment and /or long course/exercise; re-integration issues upon returning from a deployment (dealing with changes within the family, stress, etc.); and, in the extreme case, returning to a spouse/partner who had left. On the issue of re-integration, some members stated that:

> *"It's more difficult being at home than being away. The re-integration part is hard".*

> *"Re-integration: the kids have a hard time with it. They get into a routine and then we come back and mess it up".*

86.   Many members with families believed that the CF was not doing enough to support families. Some suggested that there should be more "family days" and daycare services, while others argued that the CF does not care about families.

> *"If the military wanted you to have a family, they would have issued you one".*

> *"The CF only pretends to care about families to appear politically correct."*

87.   As a result, many of these members reported feeling pressured to chose between their family and career. The common theme in these discussions was that the amount of time members

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[3] For this section, the word family is narrowly defined as a member having a spouse/partner and children. This narrow focus has been used in order to accurately reflect the way members used the term in the focus groups.

were spending at work and away from home was becoming increasingly problematic and in some cases "beyond the coping ability of their families" (Dunn and Morrow, 2002).

> *"When you leave the military, will the military be there for you? NO! When you leave the military, will your family be there for you? YES!".*

88.   Single members often argued that it was difficult for them to establish meaningful relationships since they were often chosen to perform tasks (especially during the holiday periods) in order to allow their married colleagues an opportunity to spend time with their families. In many instances, the use of the word "family" was seen as problematic since single members perceived it as excluding them. For them, it often meant special privileges for members with spouses/partners and children.

89.   **Impacts of Time Away/Deployments on Families**: When discussing the impacts of deployments and time away on their families, member comments can broken down into three impact areas: spouses/partner, children, and leave. In relation to spouses/partners, participants who identified themselves as having a high PERSTEMPO reported that it was difficult for them to establish a normal routine with their spouse/partner. Their comments touched upon the difficulties in making family decisions (e.g. whether or not to buy a house, how to raise children, etc.) to the difficulties in readjusting to family life after a deployment. In many instances, members reported that they or their colleagues had experienced divorces and/or separations, as well as difficulties in establishing meaningful relationships as a result of PERSTEMPO. Although members stated that deployments of six months were sometimes problematic (especially if they have done a number of them), there was a general feeling that it was a combination of deployments and overall time away that caused the most difficulties (deployments, plus exercises, plus courses, etc.). Members often argued that unscheduled, last minute and/or unplanned time away was more detrimental to their family routine than a traditional six-month deployment. Older members also expressed concern for the families of younger soldiers, sailors and air personnel, who were deploying at much higher rates than they were:

> *"This life or lifestyle is harder on the young guys. Us old guys, our families know what its like, they've either adjusted or left us. The young guys are constantly away from home*

and often didn't expect to have to be away all the time. There's a lot of deception going on at the recruitment centres".

"The Navy is weird. Sometimes you sail for a few days, sometimes for a week, sometimes for a few months and sometimes it seems like you're gone forever. It's the short trips that really screw up the routines at home. Here for a week, gone for a bit, come back and go again. There's got to be a way to combine exercises and cut down on this crap".

90.   Re-integration issues also emerged when discussing time away.   Again, members indicated that re-establishing a regular routine was difficult.   Members often told focus group facilitators that if they wanted to know the true impacts of PERSTEMPO, they should ask their wives/husbands or partners. Members reported their loved ones often told them that they had changed.

"Being away screws things up. You get home and you have an agenda, but so does your spouse. You both want time off, to go out, etc.. I think its time for me to take a break, but she needs one also".

"People go to sea and get a routine going, then, they give you a shore posting and everything gets screwed-up, your routine goes to hell. You fall out of that regular routine and that's when your family breaks down. Were not used to being home and our spouses aren't use to us being around and next thing you know you find out you do not get along".

91.   **<u>Divorce/Separation</u>**: A common perception among focus group participants was that the past ten years have cost a lot of members their personal relationships.   Members normally attributed break-ups, separations and divorces to the CF's work and deployment load.   It was frequently expressed that the majority of relationship breakdowns occurred in the re-integration part of the deployment phase:

"The last ten years have been hard and bad. There have been a lot of divorces".
"There's huge divorce rates in the Navy, perhaps you should ask people how many times they have been married. We take bets to see who will get divorced next".

92.   Although many reported that they have heard of a lot of marriages breaking down as a result of PERSTEMPO, only a small number indicated that their personal relationship had actually broken down. Of greater interest was that of those who did discuss their own marital breakdowns, only a few entirely blamed the CF's current workload. The majority indicated that

the workload exacerbated on-going problems. Overall, single members seemed to be more vulnerable to relationship breakdowns than were married members.

93.   **Romantic Relationships**: Single members often discussed the inability to establish and/or keep meaningful relationships with intimate partners. Some reported that it was common for them to receive e-mails "*saying goodbye*" as a result of the amount of time they spent away from their companion in the beginning stages of their relationships. Many single focus group participants were vocal in their dissatisfaction with what they perceived as the CF's single members policy: if you're single, you do not have the responsibility of a family and are therefore always available. Members' stated:

> *"My whole career has been deployments. I will leave when my 20 years are up to develop that relationship aspect of my life".*

> *"It's almost impossible to form relationships when you sail over 200 days a year".*

94.   **Spouses'/Partners' Employment**: One source of frustration for CF members when discussing their families was the impact of postings on their spouses/partners careers. Members reported that it was often difficult for their spouse/partner to find employment when they were frequently required to relocate. This was especially problematic when members were posted from urban to rural areas and when members were posted to locations in Quebec when their spouse/partner was Anglophone (the same applied for French-speaking members posted to Anglophone areas). Many participants argued that given their current PERSTEMPO, the added stressors associated with postings were making them reconsider their careers in the CF (for further discussion see Dunn and Morrow, 2003). Members frequently questioned why the CF had to move personnel as often as it did, the argument being that professional development through postings was an archaic notion that should be re-examined. In general, it was reported that today's military family is "*much less portable*", that is, that families were no longer traditional (e.g. male breadwinner) and that family considerations such as the impacts of postings on children's education often outweighed career considerations.

95.   **Children and Childcare:** When discussing family related issues, many commented on the impact their workload and time away was having on their children. Those with young

children expressed that it is often difficult for their little ones to understand why their mother or father was constantly away from home. Members often commented that six month deployments were at times easier on their children because they were "*one shot deals*" as opposed to one week away "*here and there*" which constantly disrupted their children's routines. In some cases, members reported that their children acted out at school or engaged in delinquent behaviour as a result of them being away. While some brushed this off as children being children, others strongly believed it was their children's way of coping with their parent's departure:

> *"My kid does not understand why I'm gone all the time. Where's daddy, does he not like me".*

> *"I leave for three days, or one week or two months. My kids are screwed-up by this. I tell them I'm gone for a few days and they think I am not telling the truth, they think I'm going for months. Make us go for three months or six months, that I can deal with, but stop the frequency of it. We need to organise things better".*

> *"There are problems going on in the family that you will never be able to capture. How do you capture a kid missing daddy, or a kid doing bad in school because daddy is away?"*

96.   Other common themes that emerged in discussions included: missing special occasions (births, birthdays, graduations, etc.); young children not recognizing their parents (CF father/mother); problems at school (grades, attendance, etc.); children expressing sadness, and, children wishing they had a normal life. One member illustrated how his child expressed her feelings:

> *"My daughter would hide my work-boots knowing that when I put my uniform on I was going away for awhile. When I came back, she would hold onto my leg for a day or two".*

97.   Apart from the impacts of time away, members were also concerned about the impacts of postings. It was frequently reported that postings were not only stressful for members, but in some cases, more so for children. In particular, CF parents were concerned about their children's education. Some reported that they would no longer move their families with them when posted since it would mean having to change their children's school again. Children's educational stability was a common theme:

"I have two 15 year old kids. My kids were not moved with me. They have a parent, but I don't see them".

"My son is starting grade nine, if I get posted, I will not take him out of that school. It is too hard on the kids. New place, new home, new environment".

98.   Members also often commented on the need for increased daycare services. The availability and accessibility of daycare services was a major concern for CF single parents. It was argued that emergency childcare services offered by MFRC's were useful, but not sufficient. Some members, for instance, reported a discrepancy between what they and the MFRCs' defined as an emergency:

"There are a lot of single parents in the CF and we are expected to deploy with hardly any notice. I found out I was being deployed two weeks before I left. What if a babysitter was not available, I have no family where I live".

"We should get free day-care access when we are deployed. It would help the families out a lot".

99.   **Leave:** As mentioned in a previous section, members who discussed family issues often expressed frustration concerning annual leave. Members stated that the requirement for them to take their annual leave by the end of the fiscal year was often problematic since they could not take leave at the same time as their family members. They consistently stated that the CF should allow them to carry an uncapped amount of annual leave if they have been deployed over the course of the year. Many suggested that this would increase morale and would prevent people from using up their leave at times when their families were not available. It was also noted that this would reduce the number of people who take annual leave prior to a deployment but still find themselves working while on leave in order to get ready for that deployment. The quote below is one of many examples given in relation to the impact of deployments on leave:

"When I get back from the Persian Gulf, I'm going on a five-month course in Halifax... then it's the end of the year. I will be told to take my personal leave after this. My wife works and my kids go to school, what a holiday I have to look forward to".

100.   **Services for Families/MFRCs**: Although some focus group participants were very pleased with the services their families received from MFRCs, the majority were cynical. Although members often could not describe or comment on any of the programs and services that

MFRCs' offered, their disdain for them was at times obvious. Members frequently expressed that they did not want their family members participating in MFRC programs and initiatives since they viewed them as nothing more than a referral service and/or place where people gossip. The following comments reflect the range of negative and positive participant feedback:

> *"MFRCs …give me a break, they're a crock. It's a social network for military wives who like to gossip".*

> *"Sailors in general hate the MFRCs. There's no benefit. All they are is a referral service. Ya, I'm going to go spill my beans so that everyone can gossip about it and all I get in return is go see so and so".*

> *"The MFRC is good. It shows that the CF cares about families."*

> *"The MFRC is the best spent money in the CF".*

101.   While some reported that they were not aware of MFRC services at all, those who used them suggested that services needed to be standardized at a national level to ensure that the same services were available at all MFRCs across Canada.

7.7 Leadership

102.   Members vehemently expressed that the current level of PERSTEMPO in the CF, and the management of it, was a leadership issue/problem. Although members stated that international taskings, deployments, and so forth, are largely influenced by politicians, a consensus emerged that senior leadership must be more accountable for the well-being of their personnel. The most common complaints voiced by members included leadership's inability to prioritize tasks, and that leaders do not manage their personnel resources properly.

103.   **Can do Attitude/Leadership by Example:** Throughout the focus groups, members consistently argued that leadership needed to play a more active role in encouraging members to find a better balance between work and personal/family life. It was believed that leadership needed to stop talking about balancing work and personal/family life and start leading by example. It was argued by members that it was difficult for them to leave work when they saw their own bosses consistently working long hours. Many reported that working long hours and

during holidays was a consequence of a *"yes we can do syndrome"* and the inability of *"saying no"* throughout the chain of command. It was often stated that nobody says no:

> *"We need to say "see ya" to the can do attitude. Its hurting us, its hurting our people."*

> *"The taskings need to change. We just do not have enough personnel."*

104. Members frequently indicated that given today's PERSTEMPO, the traditional *"can do attitude"* can no longer be applied when accepting taskings. Participants stated that leaders need to start *"saying no"*. When further probed, it was argued that the *"can do attitude"* is often perpetuated as a result of leadership instability. As reported by Dunn and Morrow (2002), there was a common perception that the CF's career progression planning was nothing more than *"an exercise in ticket punching"* (where officers are cycled through positions in units for a short period to gain specific experience that was needed to get them promoted), while more junior personnel would be in units for a much longer period and had to support these leaders who often did not fully grasp the units' workload (both past and present). As a result, it was common to hear that leaders were more interested in advancing their career objectives by maintaining a *"can do attitude"* than they were in the well-being of their personnel:

> *"Officers' postings are too short to remedy long term problems. If it takes a long term solution, he's not going to deal with it…if it takes a four year solution and he's there for only two years, he's going to apply a band-aid solution, then leave it for the next guy to fix; maybe the next guy is going to put another band aid, so what's going to happen in 10 years? That's 10 band Aids!"*

> *"We get one bad PER and we're done. The CO's punching his ticket, we all are. So we say yes and move on".*

> *"Whether it be UN taskings, ships deploying…after committing to doing something, they leave it to others to figure out how they can manage it. They accept taskings without knowing what the repercussions of saying yes are".*

105. Although members reported being frustrated by some leaders inability to say no and/or the CF's *"can do attitude"*, many reported that they would no longer tolerate it. Although some acknowledged that there was not much that they could do besides leaving the organization, others suggested they were no longer working past regular working hours in order to *"catch-up with their in-baskets"*. In their words:

"I put enough overtime in over my career. Now I'm not interested in putting in an awful lot of overtime. If it can't get done in a certain period of the today, it will have to wait until tomorrow. If works not getting done, maybe they will start to bring in other people to do it".

106.   **Lack of trust in Subordinates:**   The notion that leadership needed to be re-examined was consistently mentioned in the focus groups. Although there was much grumbling in relation to the "careerist" mentality found in some CF leaders, virtually all participants, whether they saw the CF as a calling or as a career, believed that there needs to be more professionalism, more two-way loyalty, and more trust in subordinates. Members expressed great dissatisfaction when they feel that they are being micro-managed.

> *"With promotion freezes you have 40 year olds in the lower ranks and they treat you like kids. I've been here for 30 years...we're not kids, we're not slaves, we're not peons. We're smart so stop treating us like kids".*

107.   Members (especially junior NCMs with many years of experience), often reported feeling discouraged and frustrated that their experience and knowledge was not trusted or not *sought by their superiors. In many instances, they reported feeling that:* "You're not a team player if you express an opinion*. They stated:*

> *"Some are a waste of rations. They don't trust us, it's insulting, they give you no benefit of the doubt. They're only around to punch their ticket. You know, don't talk to the men, those who do inquire or associate with the troops get shunned".*

> *"The officers don't want to listen to us because it makes them look bad, its all careerism, they should join because they care".*

> *"There's no trust in the leaders. They are young and have no experience. I want you to do this my way, but they have no experience".*

108.   When further probed, the most common explanation given for this lack of trust was that too much micro-managing was occurring as a result of superiors "*protecting their jobs*". Many also reported that this led to a fear in making decisions:

> *"The leadership makes absolutely no decisions, they are scared shitless that something might ruin their career. Plain and simple, they are afraid of making decisions".*

109.   **Leadership "Out of Touch" with Members:** It was common for members to suggest that leadership "*does not listen*" and that "*they just don't get it*". A common complaint was that members felt leadership did not spend enough quality time talking to personnel. They argued that senior leaders are often sheltered from the truth by middle-managers who do not want "*problems on their watch*". Although it was acknowledged that senior leaders are probably too busy to walk around discussing issues with members, it was still believed that more effort could be made talking with individuals vice advisors who are "*at the top of the food chain*". One consequence of the lack of interaction was that many believed that leaders in Ottawa and across the CF were in a different era, that is, that they were "*out of touch*" with the concerns of their subordinates. The following comments were frequently made: "*Our leadership is lost*", "*Our leadership has no new ideas*", and "*People discuss things at NDHQ who have not been away at sea since 1985*".

110.   **Leadership Style:** Similar to attrition focus group findings (Dunn and Morrow, 2002), numerous comments were made about the indecisiveness of leaders. Members perceived that leaders were not willing to take a stand on issues for fear of making mistakes or making decisions that could potentially jeopardize their careers (especially saying no to taskings that ultimately result in increasing member workloads). Members frequently expressed their discontent at hearing soon to be retired and/or retired senior leaders (especially General Officers) discuss the CF's personnel and resource shortages once they know their careers are over. Although they normally agreed with their comments, many regretted that this leadership quality (speaking out) was not visible to all members when they occupied senior leadership positions.

111.   When probed about leadership, it was revealed that one of the greatest challenges in the CF at the moment (members acknowledged the dilemma leaders are in) is combating, what is referred to as, the: "*don't rock the boat mentality*". Members also expressed that they want to see a leadership that is strong, that takes a stand on issues, that monitors the well-being of their personnel, and when required, can subordinate their career aspirations in order to make informed decisions. Members wanted to see a leadership culture that is not autocratic, but one that can make well-thought out decisions based on reflection and consultation. Members believed that good leaders should be able to balance different styles of leadership, suggesting that there is a time and place for the "*laissez-faire style*" and a time and place for the "*charismatic style*".

"If you're a leader, you're a leader, so be one. Take responsibility for the actions of your people. Don't kill the young guy by blaming him or her, teach them properly and make them learn".

"We have an individual who has called in sick eight times on consecutive watches, there have been no repercussions. It's a leadership thing, track it and deal with it. Nothing like having a leadership that is afraid of any type of confrontation. Is confrontation not what we do?"

112.   **Leaders Require HR Skills:** Members generally believed that years of experience and deployment experience should be considerations in promoting people to senior ranks, however, they should not be the only criteria. It was often expressed that an important criteria for leaders that is often overlooked is people management skills. Members frequently stated that leaders who lack this skill set are often "*out of touch*" with their people. They further affirmed that it was wrong for the CF to assume that management skills are linked with years of experience. Members identified the ability to listen to people, the ability of delegating responsibility, and open-mindedness as key variables in people management skills:

"We have a brutal leadership problem here. Our boss tells us he doesn't want to hear a thing. He has made it clear, if he doesn't ask us a question he does not want us to bother talking with him".

"The chiefs are not listening, people in general are not listening and if they are, they ignore what they hear. The attitude is they said that but I think this".

113.   **Accountability/Support:** As previously mentioned, members consistently expressed that leadership needs to be more accountable and needs to promote a supportive work environment. On the accountability side, members stated that leadership can't "*duck and avoid responsibility*". Members often discussed how they felt they were being held accountable for bad decisions or the lack of decision-making ability of their superiors. Although members stated they wanted more responsibility delegated to them, they also believed that leaders needed to be supportive enough to accept that some members will ultimately make mistakes. As one member stated: "*Authority is useless without support from leaders… Remove the fear of making wrong decisions*". Accepting that subordinates might make mistakes once in a while, was identified as a big variable in ending what members described as the recent trend of over micro-managing everything and everyone, or being treated like a "*40 year-old two-year old*". Members generally believed that if superiors

viewed mistakes as an educational process (and not as a reflection upon them), it would assist in creating a learning environment where people would not be afraid of discussing issues or topics they do not understand.

114.   **CF Direction:** Members consistently urged senior leaders and politicians to take a hard look at what the CF actually does. Many blamed the current state of the CF (which they see as improperly funded, with poor equipment, and a severe shortage of personnel) on an unclear mandate, mission, and/or vision and direction. It was common for members to state that there is constant uncertainty about the direction of the CF. Many members argued that the CF needs to figure out what it's mission is; that is, that the CF needs a standard goal. For example, focus group participants emphasized that:

> *"Why are we in Bosnia and the Persian Gulf? We need to look at what we are doing We are wasting millions on this crap and morale is low. As a result, we have no money for equipment, people get frustrated and are leaving in huge numbers and who in their right mind would want to join. Think and be smart about things".*

> *"We have moved from a formal world to an informal world with a quick tempo. We have proven our ability to react to change, however, there is too much of it at once. We have shifted from doing business planning 3-6 years in advance to trying to do it all in the same year".*

7.8 Other Issues

115.   At the end of each focus group, members were given the opportunity **-** although in some cases not specifically linked to PERSTEMPO - to discuss other issues/concerns that they have in relation to their careers/work experience in the CF. The issues presented below summarize the discussions that took place.

116.   **Military Life/Culture**: Throughout the focus groups, members frequently commented on military life and military culture. Many of them expressed that they often experienced role conflict in relation to modern military operations. Many (especially those in the Army) claimed that they were constantly grappling with the concepts of "warrior" and "peacekeeper". Although it was argued that the nature of the operation will often determine what role they will play,

members expressed some frustration that many within the CF have not acknowledged this dichotomy between the two mindsets. This 'role confusion' can have tangible results, such as impractical training exercises. Many suggested that the CF's military culture needed to be flexible enough to adjust to modern operations. For example, it was common to hear from sailors that the Navy still "*works in a steamer mentality*" and from soldiers that the Army was still at war with an identified enemy, and that these approaches (in most cases) could not be applied to modern ops.

117. Apart from role conflict, many expressed frustration with what they described as the emerging CF culture. Members reported that they are seeing more careerism in their colleagues and superiors and much less camaraderie, loyalty, and other characteristics associated with military ethos. It was frequently suggested that many were seeing the CF as "*just another job*" or career and not as a vocation or "calling". The following descriptions of the CF were commonly heard: "*Brotherhood loyalty is gone*"; "*CF treats people like a corporation*"; "*The military is now a civilian organisation*"; "*Corporatism is high*"; "*Military is now a democracy*". Especially problematic for those who suggest that too much careerism has crept into the CF and that the CF is no longer a way of life but now just a job, is that those who view the CF as a career are often "*ticket punching*" at the expense of those who are constantly deployed and tasked. Many believed that the loyalty they demonstrate to the organization in the form of accepting taskings, deployments and hard work, are not acknowledged by an organization that seems more interested in ensuring that bilingual requirements, employment equity targets, etc. are met. In turn, they argue that the CF is no longer "*fun*", and most notably that it has changed from an employer of choice to one of last resort.

118. **Pride in the CF:** Throughout the focus groups, members often made reference to the concept of pride in the CF. In fact, it was common to hear members claim that there was "*no more pride in the CF*". The following themes consistently emerged in discussions surrounding pride: loss of core values in the CF family; loss of loyalty and honesty; less pride in wearing the uniform; lots of disillusionement and frustration; low morale; and, less camaraderie. When further probed in relation to why participants felt that there was a declining sense of pride, the following answers were often given: too much careerism; too much micro-management and not

enough responsibility; declining physical fitness standards; and, declining qualification training. In the words of some members:

> *"There's no discipline and no pride today. The military used to be a team, it was fun, now, its all empire building, careerism, basically everybody looking out for themselves".*

> *"I love my job but I hate the Navy. The attitude around here stinks. You fight with too many bosses and officers are only around for two years to punch their ticket. At least for them there is a light at the end of the tunnel".*

119.   It was, however, interesting to note that although many members argued that pride in the CF was declining, feelings of pride emerged in the focus group discussions. It was very common, for example, to hear members begin conversations by saying that there was no pride in the CF, and to later contradict themselves. What was clear, however, was that members had a difficult time separating lack of resources and personnel, PERSTEMPO, and pride.

> *"In every mission I've been on, Canadian soldiers outshine all other nations. They are better trained and dedicated. When we work in other environments, we have massive workloads, and stress. We carry ten times the responsibility, but we can each walk away feeling as though we did a very good job. My frustration is not hidden. The fact is we have "fence walkers". Canada needs to be stronger than we are. We [soldiers] don't have the support or the equipment to back up our reputation".*

120.   **<u>Charter of Rights and Privacy Act</u>**: Members were very vocal throughout the focus groups about the perceived impacts of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms on the CF. Two evident trends emerged in these discussions: on the one hand, members accepted and understood what the provisions of the Charter were, and applied them accordingly in their daily functions; on the other, some argued that the Charter "*tied their hands*". Some of the typical complaints about the impacts of the Charter included: that it had eroded discipline, that it gave individuals too many rights, and that it had negatively impacted upon training standards. For members in non-supervisory roles, there was a general feeling that the provisions in the Charter and Privacy Act protected them from revealing their medical and personal situations. Members were generally comfortable with this since it meant that their superiors would not be made aware of the exact nature of their personal situations. While some members reported being comfortable telling their superiors about their personal circumstances, others were not, since they felt that there would be career consequences for doing so. Members in supervisory positions, however, argued that not

knowing what their personnel's circumstances were (medical and/or personal) impeded their ability to be effective leaders. Common complaints in this regard, included: not knowing the severity of the situations; not knowing when the member would be returning to the unit; and ultimately, difficulties with unit morale, climate, readiness, and operational effectiveness. Some members consistently stated that the Charter and Privacy Acts were increasing their PERSTEMPO, since some of their colleagues were using these Acts in order to not deploy. While they acknowledged that some cases were legitimate, they also argued that many were abusing the system.

121.   Another evident theme was that many did not know how to apply these concepts (human rights and privacy) in their everyday functions. In many focus groups, it was common to hear members arguing about how these legislations should be interpreted. Some suggested that they simply symbolized a "*change in the way the CF does business*" while others suggested "*it made the CF dysfunctional*". Those who argued that it just changed the way the CF did business, normally pointed out that "*times had changed*", thus meaning that traditional ways of disciplining people, for example, had to be replaced by more modern approaches. The main point in these discussions was that legislation does not mean members cannot be disciplined, etc., it just meant that supervisors had to change their "*ways and tools*". Those arguing that legislation had made the CF dysfunctional typically stated, for example, that disciplining was no longer a part of the CF culture and that they were powerless when they were faced with circumstances dealing with discipline. Arguments surrounding training standards declining were of a similar nature, there were those who claimed that the Charter did not mean everybody passes basic training and other training activities, and others who suggested that the Charter meant that everybody passes.

122.   It was common for members to express that they were not familiar with the Acts and had never been trained or taught how to apply them in their everyday activities. Some members suggested that it would be useful to have training were members are shown or told what they can and can't do. For example, what is an acceptable disciplinary action in a given situation or what to do with an individual who does not meet basic training requirements. Members on all sides of the debate generally agreed that initiatives such as the SHARP (Standard for Harassment and Racism Prevention) sensitization course are useless because they only explain policies and

definitions. They do not, however, teach members what approaches they should use in their activities in order to comply with the legislations. The following quotations illustrate the confusion:

> *"The problems are starting in basic training, there's just too many human rights problems. People don't get it. You can tell someone to do things, instead they think if you do that you will have a complaint filed against you. That's simply not the case. Human rights makes you think, but it does not make you stop doing your job or getting others to do theirs. Everybody needs to be briefed on this, they need to know what they can and can't do. It's a huge problem because people think that they can't do anything anymore which is not the case".*

> *"We always go from one extreme to another. Everybody is afraid of saying something wrong because if you do you will get picked-up for harassment or sexism or something".*

> *"There's nothing wrong with being firm, human rights has gone too far. You get in trouble when you are being firm".*

123.   **Gender Integration and Diversity:** Although some members in all environments still hold traditional views in relation to gender integration, focus group discussions revealed that concerns surrounding integration were more related to leadership "paranoia" and PERSTEMPO. Members (both men and women) often indicated that one of the greatest barriers that still exists in relation to gender integration (apart from traditional views) is leadership making a big deal out of something they shouldn't. It was repeatedly argued by members that leadership is too concerned with public opinion and the views of members' spouses/partners than they are with "*seeing the big picture*". It was commonly reported that male and female members work well together in all environments. The following quotation reflect the nature of these discussions:

> *"The senior ranks make gender integration etc. so damn complicated. Mix the bunks, let us do our work. Sex and sexuality are equated and that's wrong".*

124.   Both male and female members serving in the Navy were the most vocal in discussions surrounding integration. Navy personnel consistently discussed the Navy's no mixed-bunking policy. Although it was reported that some traditional Navy personnel see it as the "*women's issue*", nearly all Navy participants explained that their resentment towards integration is not aimed at women, but at such policies that they view as increasing their PERSTEMPO. Members reported that the no mixed bunk policy meant that they often have to sail short. This, they argued,

was a problem created by a leadership that is too concerned with public image and the views of spouses/partners who may appose mixed bunking as a result of associating sex and sexuality:

> *"Gender integration has increased PERSTEMPO because you have open bunk spaces. We had a female posted to our ship but she couldn't sail with us because there was no woman bunk. Fuck it, mix us up, do you not want integration?"*

> *"Its frustrating when you can't fill positions because women and men can't be mixed...that means we again have to sail short. What ends up happening...is that someone gets booted off the deployment who helped us get the ship operationally ready".*

125.   Very little discussion took place on the topic of diversity. Overall, discussions surrounding gender integration and diversity were in almost all cases linked to operational effectiveness. In both cases (diversity and integration), members were positive as long as they felt that there were common and fair standards. Regardless of gender, nationality, etc., members only found diversity and integration problematic if there was a perceived double standard and/or if it increased their workload.

126.   **Politics**:   A common belief amongst members was that politicians have too little knowledge of what life is like in the CF. As a result, members believed that politicians who are involved in making military-related decisions should be educated on the military and how it functions in order to make informed decisions that properly balance politics and military requirements. Members generally felt that politicians make decisions too quickly without enough time to think through the consequences of their decisions, especially when it means members will be spending increased amounts of time away from home as a result of over commitments in the form of deployments (for further discussion, see Dunn and Morrow 2002). One member summed this up as follows:

> "*We need to educate politicians. Come see us, see how tired we are. They have no idea what's going on yet they make the decisions*".

127.   **Media/Public Relations**:   Another source of frustration for members is the perception that the CF is reactive and not proactive in its relationship with the media. Members often expressed that the CF's accomplishments are not well represented and in turn, hinders their relationship with the public. It was common to hear members argue that the CF's public relations

office needs to become more educational in order for civilians to understand that incidents such as Somalia do not depict what the CF is all about.

> *"The civilian population is quick to judge us because we take up the mighty tax dollar and according to the media all we do is drink and harass people. They think we travel to great spots They have all kinds of fabricated conceptions about what we do. They think we have a great life. They know nothing about what we actually do, what we do right and the types of operations we do. All they know is Somalia".*

> *"We need to educate Canadians about what we do. We need to educate them properly. It's a real pisser when the only press we get is negative. We should not fear the media, instead we should use it strategically. Let people see what we do. Show them pictures of what we do. Give Canadians a visual of what it is we do".*

128.   Members also discussed the impacts of negative media coverage on them. They stated, for example, that they are tired of constantly hearing about the politically charged Sea King procurement process; the lack of resources the CF has; and so forth. In some cases, members went so far as to say that they were embarrassed to wear their uniforms in public, or claimed that their achievements were constantly being overshadowed by politics and negative media coverage (which created morale problems and frustration). It was very common to hear that 'Ottawa' (NDHQ and politicians) is far too sensitive to public opinion, the end result being that in some cases they are defended by the senior brass and government and in other cases, "*sold out*". Again, it was emphasised that the military is not a business and should not be run by the current trend in public opinion, instead, decisions (by senior leadership and politicians) should be based on operational effectiveness and common sense.

129.   **Recruiting:**   As discussed in Dunn and Morrow (2002) and Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, (2004), it was common for members to express frustration with the CF's recruitment centres. The most common complaint was that recruitment centres often mislead new recruits in order to achieve MOC quotas. Members argued that this approach was problematic since it often led to new recruits being frustrated and/or disillusioned because they were not engaging in the activities that they expected to be performing once in the CF. It was suggested that a realistic job preview during the recruitment process could be instrumental in retaining young personnel. Members strongly believed that new recruits should be told the good and bad about life in the CF, instead it seems that the reality of the CF is kept from potential recruits in order to convince them to join.

Some members further believed the CF was recruiting the wrong type of individuals as a result of unrealistic job previews. It was emphasised that new recruits should not be surprised when they find themselves frequently away from home on exercises, deployments, etc., nor, should they be surprised if they are not sent anywhere during their first couple of years in uniform. All in all, it was stated that honesty is critical in recruitment:

> *"New recruits are being told lies at the recruiting centres so the CF can fill positions. A lot of them leave after three years because of it, some stay in the CF but only because they have families and debts".*

> *"People are being misled at the recruitment centres. What they are told often does not happen. They get bored and leave".*

130.   **Attrition**:   When discussing the impacts of PERSTEMPO, it was common to hear members say that they "*had it*" with the CF, and that if the current tempo of operations was maintained, they would "*pull the pin*" (leave the CF). Members reported that retention will become increasingly difficult if the CF does not cease to do more with less. Many claimed that a number of factors were encouraging them to consider leaving the CF: too much time away from home and family; difficulties balancing work and life; working too much for an organization that was no longer meaningful; and simply stated, that the CF was no longer worth it (for further discussion on reasons for leaving the CF see Dunn and Morrow 2002, and Grant 2002).

> *"The people who are leaving are the young, no way will they put in 20 years. The people who stay are older, have kids, and are close to retirement. There's no more fun time".*

> *"It's the CF and nobody else who is driving us away".*

131.   Apart from the issues mentioned above, another common reason given for considering leaving the CF was leadership:

> *"Do you have any idea how many people are leaving because of the terrible leadership we have? I will work two times harder for a man or woman I respect, but these people in charge today are causing many of us to just say the hell with it all".*

> *"The officers... the young guys see us put up with them and then the young guys think 'I don't want this shit'".*

132.   **Quality of Life (QOL)**:   Members generally believed that QOL initiatives were positive (as is similar to other focus group findings with the Regular Force on attrition (Dunn and Morrow, 2002) and Service Providers on PERSTEMPO (Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, 2004). However, many stated that it was difficult to "enjoy" them as a result of their current workload and personnel shortages:

> "*There's no point in having QOL for 30,000 when you need 70,000*".

> "*There's a false sense of entitlement being created by all the QOL initiatives. Some hurt our mission while others are great but unrealistic. Many cannot benefit from them due to work requirements*".

133.   It became evident throughout QOL-related discussions, that there were many misperceptions surrounding CF initiatives. There was a general misperception that anything (pay raises, new initiatives in the CF health sector, etc.) related to improving the working conditions of members and their well-being was a QOL issue and/or responsibility. For example, members consistently identified and spoke about the availability of parking spaces, leave forms being rejected, etc., as QOL issues that needed to be addressed by the Directorate of Quality of Life (DQOL). In reality, these are base-specific and require the attention of their immediate chain of command. Members who were familiar with the Project Management Office Quality of Life (PMO QOL) and DQOL through newspaper articles and web-sites, suggested that DQOL needed to be more proactive in making members aware of its roles and responsibilities. Greater awareness, they suggested, would assist in clarifying the many misconceptions that exist throughout the CF.

134.   **PERs/Promotions**:   Throughout the focus groups, members consistently expressed dissatisfaction with the CF's personal evaluation (PER) and promotion process. Members often reported that they felt individuals were not being promoted based on their competencies: "*Today we are promoting the wrong people. We promote people based on their political skills, if you have knowledge and experience forget it*".   Concerns were also raised in relation to educational requirements (college/university courses, second language courses, etc.) and volunteer work/community activities being counted in the evaluation process. Members expressed their dissatisfaction with the PER process accordingly:

"The first line on many PERs says it all. Here is Joe Blow…educated at…, that's a kick in the nuts. We work our balls to the wall, prove ourselves all the time and we get education thrown in our face in our PERs. Give us the time to study and we will do it. Deploy here, deploy there, screw up your family, and the thanks we get is you're not university educated"

"I've tried the education thing. The CF won't give me the time off for it. How do you honestly do this? Tasks, exercises, deployments, family…if you don't give us the time, how can you expect us to be educated?"

135.   Many claimed that a consequence of PERSTEMPO was that they did not have enough time to "*punch those tickets*" because they wanted to spend their time off with loved ones. They asked: "*When you have to start doing volunteer work to get promoted something is wrong. When that stuff matters in your PER, just stop it, what about family time and all that other stuff?*" Some also reported refusing promotions as a result of their workload, arguing that the CF should re-visit the concept of lateral progression (see Dunn and Morrow, 2002 for further discussion). As one member stated, having "*no possibility for lateral movement is demoralizing*".

136.   **Career Management/Terms of Service:** Terms of service was another theme that was continuously discussed in focus groups. Common issues ranged from lack of flexibility in terms of service, to last minute decisions on the renewal of terms of service. Many participants noted that they would be much more willing to stay in the CF if the terms of service they received upon completion of their initial engagement were more flexible. It was often said that given today's PERSTEMPO, many would leave the forces since they were not willing to renew for a lengthy period of time. On the other hand, some argued that initial terms of service should be increased, so that the CF does not lose individuals they just finished training and investing in. The following comments reflect the range of comments made:

"The initial engagement should be five years and not three. They train and they're told they're useless, they leave. It takes five years to get them going, its not their fault".

"Let us choose our own contracts. Three years is great…I can't justify anymore years, not at the moment anyway".

"Give us three-five year contracts and not 10-15 years. Let people renew more often, perhaps every three-four years. A 15 year contract is too long, it needs to be flexible".

137.   Apart from discussions surrounding Basic Engagement (BE) and Intermediate Engagement (IE), many nearing the end of their IE argued that indefinite periods of service (IPS) offers should occur earlier than the 18 or 19 year career point for life planning purposes. Thus, while some members argued for more flexible terms of service (short contracts) vice IE, others wanted a long-term commitment from the CF in terms of an IPS offer. In essence, members commented that, upon completion of BE, they should be given the option to choose between short contracts or IE. It was then argued, that those choosing short contracts could later request to be considered for an IPS offer. Thus, two career streams would be created which could both result in IPS.

138.   **Training Standards:** Throughout the focus groups, it was constantly repeated that training should be standardized. It was common for members to report that there were different training standards at different bases and units when preparing members to deploy. Members also maintained that it was important for fitness standards to be maintained every year, regardless of what stage one was at in their careers. On the issue of training, they suggested:

> *"Each unit or base, has different standards for preparing members. In Petawawa, you train as a unit and deploy as a unit. Here you train as an individual".*

> *"Everyone should have the same standard, and each base should be required to meet the standard. We need universal standards".*

139.   When discussing training, members often had contradictory comments in relation to CF training standards. In many instances, it was reported that training standards have been lowered in order to meet personnel target levels, while in others, it was argued that CF members are the best trained in the world. Members who argued that training standards had been lowered, gave the following reasons for this trend: being too busy doing other training that they couldn't do basic training; a lack of qualified personnel to train members in certain trades; that there was a lack of training on new equipment; and, that there was a lack of continuity/experience due to members being shuffled out of jobs too quickly. They stated:

> *"Training standards have gone down hill big time. We are taking everybody. That's what happens when you are not consistent in recruiting, etc. If you don't maintain what you have, things fall apart".*

"On my rotation, around 80 percent on the base were not current. PT tests were not current. Medicals, etc. were just signed off...poor standards".

140.   A concern voiced by many members was the amount of "*last minute training*" or otherwise called "*just-in-time training*" that was currently occurring in the CF. Focus group participants claimed that this type of training, which they described as watered down, unsafe, and bare-boned, was becoming more common given the CF's current PERSTEMPO.   As mentioned in an earlier section, some members became irate when giving examples of situations where people were being deployed to operational theatres without having the proper amount of training time or the necessary skills, arguing that in theatre, training can be a matter of life and death.

141.   **Pay and Benefits:**   Discussions surrounding pay and benefits were generally of a positive nature.   Similar to focus group findings from Regular Force members (Dunn and Morrow, 2002) and Service Providers (Dunn, Ford, and Flemming, 2004), discussions surrounding pay and benefits were often linked to PERSTEMPO. Although there were some who expressed a desire for higher salaries, the general belief was that pay was more of a concern if members felt they were being over-worked by an organization that was not providing a proper tasking/personnel ratio. Members generally believed that the CF was doing too much with too little, and that this was impacting morale in a negative manner.   Overall, members consistently expressed that shortages in personnel and time away were more of an issue than pay.   As one member indicated:

> *"Money or pay is not everything. Of course people want more but that's due to what is expected of them. Give us a normal workload, proper equipment and more personnel and you will see morale go up and a lot less bitching".*

142.   Although the majority of focus group participants were satisfied with pay, there were some who expressed frustration in relation to the type of work they and others do and the pay they receive.   In some cases, members believed that the responsibility they bore was not properly rewarded by their pay. This was especially true for those who were in acting positions (AWSE): "*My responsibilities are not met with pay. Why take responsibility if there is no incentive? There's no acting pay*".   In other cases, members expressed great dissatisfaction with the work itself, and not with pay. They argued that they were often performing mundane tasks and were not able to participate in deployments as a result of their MOC. For these members, the lack of

deployment opportunities and meaningful work, were far more problematic than level of pay. Of interest throughout these discussions, was that while some of the focus group participants expressed that PERSTEMPO would drive them to leave the organization, participants who reported a low PERSTEMPO argued that they would also leave as a result of boredom. "*I don't care how much you pay me, it's insulting to sit on your ass and do nothing*".

143.   A point of contention concerning pay entitlements for Navy personnel was linked to Sea Duty Allowance. Many who were posted to sea were dissatisfied that members who did not deploy with their respective ships were still receiving their allowance. It was argued that if a member was deemed "*unfit sea*", their sea pay should not be granted:

> "*You sail, you should get paid. If you are ill, or can't deploy or are not deployable for whatever reason you should get no sea pay. It's not fair to give sea pay to those who do not deploy. Take the sea pay away and see how fast they are cured*".

144.   There was also a common perception that: "*The CF always gives us things and in the end always finds a way of taking it back*", as exemplified in the timing of pay raises and increases in PMQ rental rates:

> "*You give us a raise and increase the cost of PMQs at the same time. PMQs should be used to save money. My mortgage is less than the rent in the PMQs.*"

> "*Give us our pay increases. We never get them. All they are is an inflation fee so they can increase PMQ costs, rations, etc.*".

145.   Another common complaint voiced by members was that compassionate travel assistance was a taxable benefit. It was argued that given the way the CF operates (deployments, postings away from family, etc.), this benefit should not be taxable: "*Everybody gets the feeling these benefits are good things, but it seems [unfair that] every benefit is being taxed*".

146.   Overall, apart from the complaints mentioned above, members were generally satisfied with their pay and benefits. They suggested that the CF should invest in increasing the number of personnel, training resources, etc., and not obsess over pay raises (as long as they remain competitive with the civilian sector).

8.0 CONCLUSION

147.   Focus groups were conducted with members of the Canadian Forces across Canada and at deployment sites in order to gain insight into their perceptions of the impacts of PERSTEMPO (on themselves, their loved ones and the CF). The overwhelming sentiment throughout the focus groups was that the CF is doing too much with too little. Members consistently expressed that the two most problematic issues facing the CF are lack of resources and shortages of personnel. Almost all areas discussed in this report can in some way be linked back to these two areas of concern. For example, lack of personnel was often linked to too much time away, to problems in finding qualified instructors, to individuals missing courses and to superiors not having enough time to keep in touch with their subordinates. Similarly, lack of resources was linked to poor equipment, not enough training exercises, and so forth.

148.   Of interest throughout the discussions was the perception that things were falling apart in the CF. Whether members were discussing the organization (people frustrated and leaving as a result of their workload and time away), their families (people separating and/or in the process of divorcing as a consequence of PERSTEMPO), or their own personal situations (fatigue and burnout as a result of their heavy workload), it was consistent for members to cast things in a negative light. Of greater interest, however, was the number of contradictions that emerged from these discussions. For example, while members consistently expressed that training standards were eroding as a consequence of under-funding, lack of resources, PERSTEMPO, etc., they also stated that they were amongst the best trained military members in the world and were being recruited by civilian organizations as a result of their training, experience and expertise.   At this time, many questions remain in relation to what aspects of PERSTEMPO have had the greatest impact on members, their loved ones and the organisation: Is it solely the CF's current deployment load? Is it the time away from home more than 24 hours members are expected to spend away? Is it the number of work hours that members are working that is having the greatest impact? Or, is it a question of all of these variables combined that could be having the greatest impact?

149.   Although members consistently discussed the same themes and concerns regardless of their rank, environmental uniform, gender, etc., it is essential to collect quantitative data and conduct rigorous statistical analyses in order to properly examine the themes that have emerged in focus groups. At this time, it would be premature to make conclusions about the impacts of PERSTEMPO. While some excel and find motivation within a high PERSTEMPO environment, others will be damaged by it (burnout, divorce, attrition, etc.). That being said, those who enjoy a high PERSTEMPO rate might also eventually find themselves demonstrating signs of its impact (fatigue, stress, etc.). On the contrary, the impacts of a low PERSTEMPO can be just as damaging to a members' sense of accomplishment, morale, and willingness to remain in the organization.

150.   Regardless of whether one can or cannot sustain the current rate of PERSTEMPO in the CF, focus group findings clearly indicate that the right balance between PERSTEMPO (deployment load, time away more than 24 hours, and garrison load) and down-time is crucial for the well-being of all personnel, their loved ones, and the organization. In the short term, identifying a healthy and sustainable PERSTEMPO rate will not only be beneficial to the organization, but will also assist in improving the quality of life of its members. In the long term, it will assist in making the CF a career of choice.

151.   It was also evident throughout all the focus groups that members had great difficulty separating PERSTEMPO, budget cuts, and lack of personnel. Members consistently expressed that the sum of these three areas led to negative perceptions of the CF and their work, and ultimately was impacting their well-being and the quality of their personal relationships.

152.   Although it was clear that there was a lot of cynicism towards the CF, NDHQ, leadership and politicians, it was also evident throughout the focus groups that there is no shortage of well-meaning personnel to carry the CF's current workload. Members are driven by: being able to do their jobs well (having the proper equipment and training); by a belief in the value of their military lives (meaningful work and operations); by pride in the CF; by believing that they're making a difference; by being challenged to perform difficult tasks; and by continuously learning

new skills. For many, pride in serving their country was the main motivator for continuing to serve at the current pace of operations.

153.   The data described in this report were gathered in order to assist in the preparation of comprehensive survey instruments for administration to a large national sample of personnel in Canada and to members deployed internationally. This pragmatic goal was satisfied and the surveys were employed in 2002. Had the focus group effort been intended to stand alone, the protocol (and resulting findings presented here) would have sought to represent the views of all CF members as accurately as possible. Instead, the protocol sought to reveal as many issues and problems associated with PERSTEMPO as possible, in order that the surveys could capture the scope and breadth of difficulties experienced by our people and their loved ones. As a result, much care must be taken with interpreting the findings described herein. At the minimum, readers should consider the survey findings to be reported in forthcoming publications to supplant those presented here.

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ANNEX A: EXPLORATORY PERSTEMPO FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION

a. Name, affiliation of facilitator, aim of the project ("To identify the incidence and impacts of PERSTEMPO upon CF members, their loved ones, and the Canadian Forces. To examine, in other words, members' deployment load, their Time Away from home, and their workload, and discover what these have meant for their families and for the effectiveness of the CF)

b. provide more explanation on concept of "PERSTEMPO" if necessary

c. identify the sponsor of the project (ADM Human Resources Military)

d. identify the office conducting the research (Director of Quality of Life, DQOL)

e. explain, if necessary, the mandate of DQOL (documentation provided)

f. offer guarantee of confidentiality (no direct comments will be attributed in such a way that any individual could be identified), although point out that other members of their unit/Base are in the room and they should understand that the meeting is thus "public"

g. if civilian spouses are involved assure them firmly that their military spouse will not be held accountable for their comments

h. make key motivational points – this is an opportunity to have their views heard at senior levels; emphasize the sincere wish for us to hear the unvarnished truth; this is a chance to influence change that will improve the lives of personnel today and into the future; we are here to learn and we need you to teach us

i. if necessary, describe impact of focus group and survey data in NDHQ

j.   ask if taping is acceptable if necessary

k.   be able to refer participants to local service providers (Padre, CF Social Worker – have

local phone numbers available)

CORE SECTION – ALL GROUPS

What changes have you seen in the CF across the past decade?

Has there been a change in the frequency at which our people are deployed?

What are the impacts of more frequent deployments on our people in uniform?

Prompts: mental health, physical health, emotional health, burn-out, stress, career intentions, job satisfaction

What are the impacts of more frequent deployments on our families?

Prompts: health of spouses, health of children, family breakdown, spousal support for members' military careers, quality of relationships (spouse-member, member-children)

What are the impacts of more frequent deployments on the CF?

Prompts: instability, systems problems, administrative difficulties, cohesion/morale, confidence in leadership, readiness, effectiveness

FOCUS 1 (minimum one group per site) – Positive Impacts of PERSTEMPO

Many people believe, and we see a lot of negative reporting in the media, that the increased frequency of deployments has been very damaging for the CF. Do you believe that this is the whole story?

In your view, have there been positive impacts as a result of all the international and domestic deployments CF members have undertaken in recent years?

Prompts: contribution to lives of Canadians, public support for the CF, making a difference around the world, rewarding experiences while deployed, skills developed by personnel, skills of leaders through concrete experience, opportunities for challenge, opportunities for travel, chance to use military training.

FOCUS 2: Negative Impacts on Personnel

We've heard a number of opinions on what has happened among our people as a result of increased deployment load in recent years. At this point we want to hear about your own experiences. How has your life changed as a result of your military service?

What are the specific negative things that you have seen happen to some people during and after deployments?

What is it about deployments that create problems for people?

How much Time Away do you spend from your home every year? Is this amount not enough, about right, or too much?

Has your workload in Canada changed? [hours, intensity, risk, predictability]

What can be done by the CF to reduce the negative consequences of high PERSTEMPO?

FOCUS 3: Negative Impacts on Loved Ones

We've heard a number of opinions on what has happened among our families as a result of increased deployment load in recent years. At this point we want to hear about your own experiences. How has your family been effected by your military service?

What about single personnel? How has your military service effected the people close to you?

What can the CF do to reduce the negative consequences of high PERSTEMPO among loved ones?

SUMMATION – ALL GROUPS

We've discussed many aspects of your military service and its effect on you and the people you care about. Is there anything important that you feel we've missed?

If necessary – describe care services available at this site

Provide a sheet for participants who wish to receive a copy of the final report to submit their mailing address (emphasize will not be used to identify people with their remarks)

Thank all participants on behalf of ADM HR-Mil and DQOL

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3. TITLE (the complete document title as indicated on the title page. Its classification should be indicated by the appropriate abbreviation (S, C or U) in parentheses after the title)

PERSTEMPO Qualitative Data: CF Member Focus Group Findings

4. AUTHORS (last name, first name, middle initial)

Dunn, Jason R., Ford, Kimberley A., and Steve Flemming

5. DATE OF PUBLICATION (month Year of Publication of document) FEBRUARY 2005	6a. NO OF PAGES (total containing information. Include Annexes, Appendices, etc.) 70	6b. NO OF REFS (total cited in document) 19

7. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (the category of document, e.g. technical report, technical note or memorandum. If appropriate, enter the type of report e.g. interim, progress, summary, annual or final. Give the inclusive dates when a specific reporting period is covered.)

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9a. PROJECT OR GRANT NO. (if appropriate, the applicable research and development project or grant number under which the document was written. Please specify whether project or grant.)	9b. CONTRACT NO. (if appropriate, the applicable number under which the document was written.)

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The aim of the PERSTEMPO and Human Dimensions of Deployments Study is to produce a comprehensive evaluation of the consequences, for members of the CF, their families, and the organisation, of recent trends in the increased frequency and intensity of international deployments and PERSTEMPO. This project report is based on focus group data collected from 214 focus groups with 2136 members during site visits to 17 Canadian Forces Bases/Wings/Units (Alert, Yellowknife, Kingston, Saint-Jean, Borden, Halifax, Esquimalt, Petawawa, Edmonton, Valcartier, Shearwater, Bagotville, Comox, Winnipeg, Trenton, Greenwood, and Cold Lake) and five International Operational Theatres (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Golan Heights, Europe, Arabian Gulf, and Eritrea) throughout 2001. The objective of these focus groups was threefold: first, to gain an understanding of CF members' PERSTEMPO; second, to gain insight into CF members' perspectives on PERSTEMPO in the CF; and finally, to understand the impacts of PERSTEMPO on members, their loved ones and the organization. The information presented in this report completes the qualitative stage of the PERSTEMPO and Human Dimensions of Deployment Study.

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Workload
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