



# Building Readiness and Generating Personnel for the Canadian Armed Forces

Addressing the dependencies that connect each part of the personnel generation lifecycle

## Summary

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are facing challenges in recruiting new personnel, training personnel in their occupational specialization, and retaining existing members over the long-term. Attempting to tackle each challenge individually will not address the overall personnel shortage challenge over the long-term.

**A lifecycle approach is needed**—one that considers the full pathway from civilians joining the CAF, receiving training, deploying on operations, receiving advanced training, and an eventual pathway back to civilian life. A lifecycle approach will enable leaders and planners to tackle the problem holistically and address the dependencies that connect each part of the lifecycle.

## The Current Defence Environment

The Government of Canada has committed to surging defence spending to reach the two per cent of GDP target set out by NATO before the end of this fiscal year (2025–26). This amounts to a \$9 billion investment. Priority areas include supporting personnel with things like pay and benefits, improving recruitment and retention, and health services for members. For major procurements, large programs include Arctic over-the-horizon radar, joint supply ships and long-range precision strike, among others.<sup>1</sup>

There is currently a gap between the ambition to deliver major procurements for the Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Navy and the number of

qualified personnel available to crew all the new platforms. Reports indicate that there are as many as 14,000 empty jobs in the CAF, where no qualified personnel exist.<sup>2</sup> This is a problem for the ability of the CAF to meet its commitments for training and operations today; and this problem will only grow bigger as Canada increases defence spending and starts buying new platforms and capabilities. The CAF is on track to grow the number of platforms and systems it will operate without having enough qualified personnel to staff them.



## Personnel and Readiness Challenges

Readiness is the function of personnel, equipment and the capability to marshal them for employment. To make meaningful progress on readiness and personnel levels, a holistic approach is necessary. Personnel generation and readiness are complex problems and need to be considered from multiple perspectives to be successfully managed and improved.<sup>3</sup> Each component of readiness is interdependent.

To address total staffing shortages, recruitment has been prioritized. There has been some progress made on recruitment—7,000 recruits were added in fiscal year 2024–25—but there have been higher attrition rates than expected among new recruits.<sup>4</sup> What this means practically is that even with a surge in recruitment, the personnel shortages continue because the CAF struggles to retain new personnel at the same rate as mid-career personnel. Recruitment efforts have been successful in persuading (mostly) young Canadians to enlist, but the attrition rate for that group is almost twice that of longer-serving personnel. Part of this can be attributed to a training system that cannot train new recruits in a timely manner, turning enthusiasm over service into frustration when there are sometimes months-long delays.

A major challenge some research shows is the “one-step-at-a-time” approach, where recruitment is addressed separately from retention, retention is addressed separately from long-term training, etc.<sup>5</sup> This approach leads to gaps across the lifecycle of personnel and readiness, especially when challenges in each part of the lifecycle are treated independently.

Training delays apply not only to basic training—where recruits learn the rudiments of military life and culture—but also to specific occupational trades training where personnel learn the specifics of their job role within the CAF. The CAF have acknowledged this capacity challenge and are seeking ways to address it.<sup>6</sup>

For more seasoned and experienced personnel, ongoing training and engagement is also necessary. A CAF strategy on retention acknowledged the importance of generating new personnel through recruitment as well as the importance of ongoing training for more senior personnel to build experience and competence, and elevate operational performance and capability.<sup>7</sup> Training is an ongoing process to keep military members ready for the challenges they will face on operations.



There are also concerns about the overall quality of life for military personnel. Pay, benefits, access to health services and the quality of life for military families are all concerns that influence the decision to remain in military service. There have been concerns about the total volume of health practitioners available to provide service to military members,<sup>8</sup> alongside broader concerns about accessing housing—including cost, availability and overall quality and age of existing military housing stocks.<sup>9</sup>



Addressing personnel levels and readiness requires attention to recruitment, training, retention and more, and they should be viewed as interconnected. Taking a lifecycle approach is useful to viewing the nature of the challenge.

## Personnel and Readiness Lifecycle

There are many steps to the personnel and readiness lifecycle, including the process of joining the military, receiving basic and advanced training, eventual operational deployments, and ensuring member and military family

quality of life. These pieces are all connected, and all need to be addressed to improve capacity across the readiness lifecycle.



Components 01, 02 and 03 are about generating interest from Canadian civilians about military service and moving through the administrative processes of intake. Once in the military, components 04, 05 and 06 are about training, learning and preparing for eventual operational deployment. Component 07 is about the life of the military member and their family, and what that looks like outside the context of training and operations.

There are currently challenges in each of the components above. Here's how Calian can help Canada address the readiness lifecycle.

# How Calian Supports Personnel Generation and Readiness Across the Lifecycle

01

## Advertising & Awareness

Raising awareness is important to generating interest in anything. Military life is no different. Communicating messages that give recruits a sense of military life—and where they can fit in it—is important. It's about showing Canadians that there is a place for them in the CAF.

Calian has decades of experience working with the CAF and deep knowledge of job roles and requirements. We also have decades of experience in advertising defence roles and finding suitable candidates. Digital engagement, career exploration tools and immersive previews can all help communicate with eligible Canadians about job roles that might be right for them.

Our training delivery solutions rely on complex data inputs and measuring human responses to activity in the training

environment. With AI-enabled management of data, we can determine where recruiting and awareness campaigns are connecting with the target audience and where messaging needs refinement. We work with large datasets for our training delivery to identify patterns and deliver clear metrics on performance. We can use those capabilities to support execution of awareness campaigns for CAF recruitment and make evidence-based adjustments to better connect with potential recruits.



## 02

### Finding the Right Role

With a potential member interested in a career in the military, the next step is to find the right role. This may include some engagement online and will probably involve a trip to a recruiting centre.

Calian specializes in finding the right people for any job role, with decades of experience recruiting for health, IT and cybersecurity, military training, engineering, and other specialized roles.

Calian has over 30 years of experience working with defence customers to find the right people for delivery, research and analysis, engineering, administration, health services and more. Canada trusts us to match the right people to job roles, and we can do the same for the military. We have experts for every field we work in that have the experience to connect people with the right roles.

We also have deep experience in property management across Canada. We own and operate over 100 medical clinics across Canada through our Primacy network. The CAF operates recruiting centres across Canada, managing real property and facilities services. Calian has decades of experience delivering that solution for healthcare professionals and can do the same for the CAF.

Our immersive experiences are ideally suited for showing potential recruits how a military job looks and feels. We have delivered immersive experiences for skilled trades, military occupations, healthcare, education and military museums. Using our immersive technology, we can model any military role to give someone an understanding of what “on duty” will look and feel like. For military customers, we developed a replenishment-at-sea simulator for sailors, and a joint terminal attack controller simulator for calls for fire.



### How to manage all these pieces

Calian's case management tools are ideally suited to managing the process. We know from public data that the administrative process for applying to the CAF is only capable of turning between six and 12 per cent of applicants into military members in recent years.<sup>10</sup> Calian's case management approaches and tools keep backlog to a minimum and connect each case to actions and next-steps to shorten the time between job interest and the first day of duty.

## 03

### Suitability Evaluation

Our expertise in finding the right people for the right job extends to suitability evaluations. Whether checking job experience, accreditations and skills, or conducting medical and psychological suitability assessments for job roles, Calian has decades of experience evaluating the suitability of candidates.

Suitability assessment starts with matching skills and experience, and confirming accreditations. With over 100 different occupational specializations within the CAF, Calian is equipped to match the profile of a candidate to the right

job role based on what each recruit brings to the table, and their medical suitability. We have decades of experience connecting job applicants to roles in the defence and security sectors.

For medical and psychological suitability, we have the experts and experience to evaluate candidates. Our clinicians are licensed physicians and practitioners and provide evaluations for suitability for different job roles based on fitness and performance requirements. Our psychologists provide enhanced psychological evaluations for roles with greater risk and demand a higher degree of personnel screening. We deliver psychological evaluations for law enforcement and national security organizations that involve carrying a firearm or higher overall risk.



For security clearances, we have decades of experience managing the process of administering clearances. Our work with DND and the CAF often requires that team members have security clearances. We can provide surge capacity to address the backlog for the CAF and manage the routine administrative process.

Using our case management system, we can manage suitability assessments, medical assessments and security clearances to make the process simple, traceable and effective for would-be CAF members.

## 04

### Introductory Training

Calian has almost three decades of experience delivering training for the CAF and for NATO. We have trained over 300,000 people, and train—on average—10,000 personnel per year. We deliver individual training to develop personal competency and deliver collective training for high-readiness units and headquarters.

Introductory training is important to shaping new CAF members' understanding of the values, ethics and expectations of working in the military. This includes a mix of classroom instruction and practical training and evaluation. Calian delivers classroom and practical training for more than 20 occupational specializations, including

communications, aerospace and aviation, driving, operating heavy equipment, and many more. Calian can surge capacity to increase the CAF's overall throughput potential for new CAF members—including for basic training and occupational specialization.

Using virtual reality and augmented reality, Calian delivers immersive training experiences that improve the quality of training, reduce the risk of injury and reduce the total number of instructors required to run a training course. Our immersive training solutions put the student in a virtual environment where they use tools and equipment and learn the correct and safe processes for occupational tasks.



We have delivered these for a range of accredited civilian occupational roles in the skilled trades and healthcare. For military customers we have delivered individual and small-party solutions for sailors conducting replenishment-at-sea activities, and a joint terminal attack controller solution for calling for joint fires.

Our technology solutions enable military customers to reduce the total number of instructors required to deliver training. With eye tracking and voice tracking, our immersive solutions will identify when students make mistakes in the process of their occupational tasks and provide correction. This approach requires fewer instructors for direct supervision of rehearsals and evaluation of students. With robust data tracking, our solutions show instructors and students specifically where in a task or process the student is developing competency and where more work is needed. This approach focuses all remedial instruction on challenge areas, not on areas where competency is being displayed. This improves the overall efficiency of training and reduces the number of total instructors required.

# 05

## Advanced Training

As CAF members progress through their careers, they gain more experience, expertise and responsibility. Mastering the basics of the occupation is essential and so is operating in a team context and leading activity. Calian has been delivering advanced and collective training for 28 years and helps the CAF build and sustain readiness.

Working with the Canadian Army Simulation Centre (CASC), Calian delivers large, complex, simulation-based military exercises to prepare units and headquarters for high-readiness duty and operational deployments. We design military exercises with the training objectives at the core of our process, and add the right technology solutions to

meet the need. We develop accurate, relevant scenarios based on the most up-to-date lessons learned from the contemporary battlefield, including Ukraine and the Middle East, to provide the most realistic experience possible.



We rely on the latest technology to deliver our military exercises. Using AI-enabled tools, we can develop exercise content in a fraction of the time compared to traditional methods. The AI-enabled tools help Calian be much more agile with exercise development, increasing the number of exercises that can be delivered in a year.

We take a system-agnostic approach to connecting training and operational C5ISR systems into a common synthetic environment. By combining constructive, virtual and live simulation—often using operational tools in training—we deliver a real “train-as-you-fight” experience that puts the training audience in a single environment. Interoperability of systems enables us to integrate any unit or formation into our synthetic environment, giving maximum value for combined, joint training.

For advanced individual training, we have delivered a wide range of simulation-based training systems, including virtual reality, augmented reality and desktop training solutions. These solutions provide advanced training for qualified individuals to augment their competencies and capability as they progress through their careers. These training solutions are essential to building advanced qualifications.



For developing leaders, Calian provides advanced leadership training to officers and warrant officers for sub-unit leadership for trades like artillery, armour, infantry, engineering and small UAS roles. These courses prepare leaders to employ their sub-unit effectively, manage resources and tasks, and prepare units for real-world missions. Calian's approach can be applied to leaders in any military trade to build the backbone of the mission-ready force.

Canada will be surging defence spending and will procure many new platforms and systems. Calian is uniquely positioned to deliver advanced training to develop more personnel than using existing processes and approaches alone. Our advanced training capability will be a strategic differentiator for the CAF to develop personnel.

## 06

### Operational Deployment

Operational deployments put military capability to the test. People, equipment, systems and organizational resilience are all tested when deployed on operations. Calian prepares military personnel for the challenges they will face on operations. Calian also provides mission-critical operational support to the CAF.

Global communications connectivity is essential for modern military operations. Space-based communications systems connect units in the field to headquarters and link all military operations to strategic command in Canada.

Calian delivers ground-based RF solutions and antennas to ensure ongoing connectivity for voice and broadband.

We deliver RF solutions and antennas for any satellite application (Earth observation and satellite communications) operating at any altitude (LEO, MEO, GEO). For Canada, we provide antennas for government departments, and we provide satellite flight operations for the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) to keep Canada's satellites on-time and on-target, no matter their mission.

For C5ISR systems, we deliver systems engineering and interoperability to enable data to move safely and securely from sensors to command posts and headquarters. We take a systems-agnostic approach to interoperability, connecting voice radios, sensors and other data feeds into a common architecture. For voice interoperability in an alliance context, we connect radios from different countries into a common architecture and use voice-to-text technology to reduce the overall volume of activity in a command post or headquarters.

To keep data safe in facilities and installations, infrastructure, networks and devices, we bring deep experience in cybersecurity and emissions security. Our cybersecurity team delivers secure cloud, network monitoring, security operations centre (SOC)/ network operations centre (NOC), and incident response services to protect data from unauthorized access. To protect against electronic intrusion, we deliver emissions security solutions to reduce the risk of electronic intrusion and then provide real-time monitoring.

## Member and Family Quality of Life

It has been said that recruitment is about finding military members; retention is about the military family. Society is always changing, and old models that assume regular moving and disruption of family life are no longer adequate to recruit and retain a new generation of military members and their families.

To keep military members healthy and ready for duty we also deliver health services at 49 CAF bases and installations with 85 health practitioner types, including doctors, nurses, dentists and a wide range of specialists. In Canada, the military does not provide health services for military family members. In partnership with Military Family Services since 2016, Calian runs the Military Family Doctor Network (MFDN) program. When the military member is posted, the family

often moves—sometimes to a new province—causing a gap in healthcare services. MFDN connects military family members with a family doctor when the family is posted to a new province, at no cost to the military family. Calian has connected over 4,000 military family members with a family doctor. MFDN means one less thing for military families to think about when they are moving.



## Life After Service

No one is born a military member. People regularly leave military service, whether early or mid-career to change their life-path, or at retirement age after a full career. No matter how someone leaves service, Calian values the years—sometimes decades—of experience that veterans bring to any job. In Canada, Calian employs over 1,000 veterans on teams across the country. In Europe, the UK and for NATO we employ another 1,000 veterans as part of our teams. Every year, we hire an average of 100 veterans to our team.

Calian is a strong supporter of the defence community and an employer of choice for veterans from all elements and specializations. We help make life after service happen for veterans.

## Conclusions

Calian remains with members of the CAF throughout their careers, including when they deploy on operations. We provide solutions to prepare military personnel for the challenges they will face on operations, and provide mission-critical support to these operations.

Our legacy of delivery to the CAF is well established. Our approaches and technology solutions have evolved alongside the CAF's to meet any mission requirement. We are a trusted partner to all our military customers because we deliver solutions to meet their biggest challenges.

With an increase in defence spending, the CAF will need to generate more personnel. Calian is a proven, trusted partner and stands ready to support the CAF across the readiness lifecycle.



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