

**Gender Integration in the Canadian Armed Forces:
Locating the RCAF Experience**

By Camas Clowater-Eriksson

April 2020

**A report written for the Canada Aviation and Space Museum
In fulfillment of the 2019/2020 Garth Wilson Fellowship**

Introduction

The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF)¹ has achieved many firsts when it comes to the employment of women in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). It was the first service to establish a women's division during the Second World War, the first to recruit women to its regular force in the post-war years, and it was the first to open all non-commissioned trades and officer classifications to women in 1987. The history of women's employment in the RCAF is embedded within the broader history of gender integration in the CAF, a process that officially began in 1970 with the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and that is, arguably, still in progress to this day. This report will outline the process by which the CAF negotiated external pressures to adopt gender integration policies from the 1960s to the 2000s, and will pay particular attention to this history as it applies to women in the RCAF.

The report will be broken into three parts. Part 1 will be an overview of the history of women's participation in the CAF and the RCAF from 1885 to 1966; Part 2 will explain the steps by which women were integrated *legally* into the CAF, a process spanning 1966-1989; and Part 3 will outline the on-going effort to *socially* integrate women into the CAF, and the challenges that have made this aspect of integration difficult. Information specific to the experience of gender integration in the RCAF will be provided where it could be found, however many gaps exist. The result is not an exhaustive study of gender integration in the RCAF, as that would require primary sources research which was outside the scope of this project. The hope is that this report will prompt further research into an underexplored topic.²

¹ This report will use the most current names for the Canadian air force (RCAF as of 2011) and the Canadian military (CAF as of 2013). While this choice unfortunately oversimplifies the organisational history of the RCAF and CAF — which have both undergone various name and structural changes over the years — it is done to maintain continuity for the reader.

² For example, the experience of homosexual servicemen and women is one aspect of gender integration that could not be explored in this report. The author found no existing research that spoke particularly to the experience of LGBTQ+ individuals in the RCAF.

Defining Gender Integration

Gender integration has been interpreted many different ways over the course of the CAF's history. Today, the project of "gender integration" involves creating an equitable military institution that is accepting of all individuals, not only those who identify as women. However, "gender integration" in the historical context of the CAF refers only to the process of integrating women into previously all-male areas of the military.³ This report will adopt a definition of gender integration proposed by Donna Winslow and Jason Dunn in their 2002 article "Women in the Canadian Forces: Between Legal and Social Integration." Winslow and Dunn define gender integration in the CAF as a process consisting of two parts: first as a *legal* process by which "women and men have equal access to all occupations within the CF [under Canadian law] and there is no discrimination based on gender"; and second as a *social* process where women are fully accepted as equals within the institution.⁴ The two processes are required for integration to be a success, removing legal barriers to women's employment means nothing if the culture of the military is hostile to their meaningful participation.

Part 1: The Foundations of Gender Integration — Women, the military and aviation in Canada (1885-1965).

Pre-war years

Foundational to understanding gender integration in the RCAF is an understanding that women have participated in the military and in aviation since long before Canada had an air force. The first women to serve formally as part of a Canadian military force were nurses, sent to

³ Charlotte Duval-Lantoine, "Words Without Deeds: A Toxic Leadership Culture and Gender Integration in the Canadian Forces, 1989-1999" (MA thesis, Queen's University, 2019), 20.

⁴ Donna Winslow and Jason Dunn, "Women in the Canadian Forces: Between Legal and Social Integration," *Current Sociology* 50, no. 5 (September 2002): 642.

Saskatchewan during the 1885 Northwest Rebellion.⁵ Canadian nurses supported military efforts during the Yukon gold rush in 1898 and during the South African War of 1899-1902.⁶ In 1901, the Canadian Army Nursing Service was established, giving members (known as “nursing sisters”) the rank, pay, and allowance of an army lieutenant.⁷ Nursing sisters remained the only paid female members of the Canadian military until the Second World War.

Aviation came to Canada in the mid-19th century when an American aeronaut named Louis A. Lauriat took to the air in a balloon in Saint John, New Brunswick in 1840.⁸ In 1909, J.A.D. McCurdy accomplished the first “heavier-than-air powered flight” in Canada when he successfully flew the *Silver Dart* for a distance of half a mile in Baddeck, Nova Scotia.⁹ The first Canadian woman to go up in an aircraft was Mrs. William Stark of Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1912, when she flew as a passenger on her husband’s Curtis biplane pusher.¹⁰ In *No Place for A Lady: The Story of Canadian Women Pilots, 1928-1992*, Shirley Render writes that “Canada’s first women fliers...were not licensed pilots but passengers, navigators, sky divers or glider pilots.”¹¹ In 1928, Eileen Vollick became Canada’s first licensed female pilot.¹²

⁵ Karen D. Davis, “Negotiating gender in the Canadian Forces, 1970 -1999” (PhD dissertation, Royal Military College of Canada, 2013), 67; Barbara Dundas, *A History of Women in the Canadian Military* (Montreal: Art Global, 2000), 15; Veteran Affairs Canada, “Women Veterans: Timeline,” <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/women-veterans/timeline#saw> (accessed 10 April 2019).

⁶ Dundas, 15; Veteran Affairs Canada, “Women Veterans: The Nursing Sisters of Canada,” <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/women-veterans/nursing-sisters#sisterhist1> (accessed 10 April 2019).

⁷ Veteran Affairs Canada, “Women Veterans: The Nursing Sisters of Canada.”

⁸ Larry Milberry, ed., *Sixty years: the RCAF and CF Air Command, 1924-1984* (Toronto: CANAV Books, 1984), 11.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Shirley Render, *No Place for a Lady: The Story of Canadian Women Pilots, 1928-1992* (Winnipeg: Portage & Main Press, 1992), 4.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 11.

First World War

Women were first employed in the military aviation industry during the First World War. At this time, Canada did not have its own air force.¹³ Canadian men who wanted to serve in the air war had to go to Britain and join either the British Naval Air Service or the British Flying Corps, which were amalgamated in 1918 to form the British Royal Air Force (RAF) 1918.¹⁴ In 1917, the British Royal Flying Corps established six training bases in Southern Ontario with its headquarters in Toronto.¹⁵ Women were employed on these bases as clerks and transport drivers and in 1918 the RAF began to employ women in more “technical roles.”¹⁶ In Volume 1 of the *Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force*, these women are only mentioned in a footnote. Author S.F. Wise acknowledges that, due to “manpower shortages,” the RAF in Toronto hired 1,200 civilian women, 600 of whom worked as mechanics in airfields and 135 of whom did engine overhaul work at repair parks.¹⁷ The hard work of these women was recognized by British military authorities in Canada, particularly Brigadier-Colonel Cuthbert Gurney Hoare. At the end of the war, Hoare wrote to the British Air Ministry for permission to create a women’s branch of the air force in Canada so that women could properly enlist.¹⁸ In May 1918, the newly established Canadian Air Force (created as a contingent of the RAF) was granted permission to recruit women for a Canadian branch of the British Women’s Royal Air

¹³ Milberry, 13-16; S. F. Wise, *Canadian Airmen and the First World War: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Airforce*, Volume 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 25-30.

¹⁴ Milberry, 15; Allan D. English and John Westrop, *Canadian Air Force Leadership and Command: The Human Dimension of Expeditionary Air Force Operations* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2012), 5-7.

¹⁵ English and Westrop, 6-7; Canadian War Museum, “Into the Blue: Pilot Training in Canada, 1917-1918,” <https://www.warmuseum.ca/learn/dispatches/into-the-blue-pilot-training-in-canada-1917-18/#tabs> (accessed 10 April 2019).

¹⁶ Dundas, 34.

¹⁷ Wise, note 114; Dundas, 34; Canadian War Museum, “Into the Blue.”

¹⁸ Erin Gregory, “Valuable Service: Women in the Canadian Aviation Industry during the First World War,” unpublished article (Ottawa: Canada Aviation and Space Museum, n.d.): 3-4.

Force.¹⁹ However, as Wise notes, “the idea appears to have been dropped” because the estimated cost of housing female recruits would far exceed that of men due to the “necessity of special provisions.”²⁰

Women were also involved in the manufacturing of military aircraft in Canada during the First World War, as employees of Canadian Aeroplanes Ltd in Toronto. The company was formed in 1916 to build training aircraft for the British Royal Flying Corps in Canada.²¹ By the end of the war, 350 women were employed at Canadian Aeroplanes Ltd, out of approximately 2,126 employees.²² Primary source research conducted by curator Erin Gregory at the Canada Aviation and Space Museum (CASM) suggests that this number may have been even higher during peak production of aircraft, when the company had as many as 2,400 employees.²³ Gregory notes “a lot of discrepancy in the primary sources about the work these women did at Canadian Aeroplanes Ltd,” but it is likely that their main role would have been in the “covering department,” where fabric was installed over parts of the aircraft (fuselages, wings and empennage) and sewn in place.²⁴ Gregory explains that this type of work “was well within women’s traditional public sphere,” as it required the same skills as being a seamstress.²⁵ It is quite likely that women were also employed in less traditional roles, such as in the doping of aircraft (when a “flexible, varnish-like substance” was applied to the fabric of the aircraft), as

¹⁹ Wise, note 114; Dundas, 38.

²⁰ Wise, note 114; Dundas, 38. It was estimated that housing women would cost \$430 a year whereas the cost of men was only \$235 a year.

²¹ Gregory, 2. Canadian Aeroplanes Ltd was formed by the Imperial Munitions Board (IMB) when they bought the Toronto Curtiss Aeroplanes company. The IMB also bought the licensing rights to produce the Curtiss JN-3 aircraft and the OX-5 engine. Under Canadian Aeroplanes Ltd, the Curtiss JN-3 was redesigned as the training aircraft JN-4 (Canadian), also known as the “Canuck.”

²² *Ibid.*, 1.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

was the case in British and German factories during the war.²⁶ There is also evidence to suggest that women performed mechanical work such as the installation and repair of wire cables (used in rigging and other parts of the JN-4 Canuck) at the factory.²⁷

Second World War

The idea for a women's military service was resurrected during the Second World War. On 2 April 1941, representatives from the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), the Canadian Army (CA), and RCAF²⁸ met to discuss the issue of employing women in the armed forces.²⁹ While the CA considered the idea, both the RCN and the RCAF viewed the suggestion as "unnecessary and unjustified."³⁰ Manpower shortages soon forced them to re-think this position.³¹ On 2 July 1941, the Governor General approved the first of the women's services: the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force.³² Its purpose was to release servicemen employed in support and administrative work for combat duties. The Canadian Women's Army Corps followed shortly after in August 1941 and in May 1942 the RCN established the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service.³³ The creation of the three women's services was significant, as it meant that women could be paid members of the military in a trade other than nursing.³⁴ In February 1942, the

²⁶ Gregory, 8-10. Gregory notes that there is no direct mention of women doping aircraft at the Canadian Aeroplanes factory in the sources she has consulted, but wartime photographs (held in CASM's archival collection) do show women in the doping room, yet they are not actively working. Gregory argues that it is likely women *were* doping aircraft as it was a common job for women in British and German factories at the time. Her analysis proposes some interesting answers for why the company might not have wanted to show women actively working in the doping room in official photographs.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁸ The Canadian Air Force was renamed "Royal" Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in 1924. It became an official military force in 1936. For more information on the evolution of the RCAF see: English and Westrop, 10.

²⁹ Dundas, 48.

³⁰ Dundas, 48; Carolyn Gossage and Roberta Bondar, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots: Canadian Women at War, 1939-1945*, Revised Edition (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), 47.

³¹ Dundas, 48.

³² Dundas, 48; Gossage and Bondar, 32, 47.

³³ Dundas, 54, 60; Gossage and Bondar, 47.

³⁴ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 68.

Women's Auxiliary Air Force was renamed the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division (RCAF WD) to reflect that women would no longer be a mere "auxiliary."³⁵

By the end of the war, approximately 17,000 women had served with the RCAF WD.³⁶ To be qualified, a woman had to have a high school entrance standing, be between the ages of 21 and 49, "in good health," of "good character," at least five feet tall, and "within the required weight standard."³⁷ A woman was not qualified if she had ever been convicted of a serious crime, was employed in a permanent position by the civil service, or had children.³⁸ Members of the WD were not integrated into male units — they had a separate organizational structure — but, in many respects, women in the WD were entitled to similar benefits to men.³⁹ They could receive a rehabilitation grant if sent overseas, were exempt from the National Defence Tax, and eventually could receive a dependent's allowance and a separation allowance (if their husband was a serviceman).⁴⁰ Pay was never equal to that of male officers and airmen, but it was raised in 1943 from two thirds of male pay to four fifths.⁴¹ Progress was also made in terms of occupations available to female recruits. When the WD was created in 1941 there were only nine trades open to women.⁴² By the end of the war women could serve in 67 out of 102 trades (See Appendix 1).⁴³ Even so, the RCAF never saw the WD as a permanent force. Its purpose was to free able-bodied men up for combat and near-combat positions, roles that remained strictly in the male domain.⁴⁴ While some women were able to transgress gender roles by doing work that was

³⁵ Dundas, 48.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁷ Dundas, 50; Gossage and Bondar, 53-54.

³⁸ Dundas, 50.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴³ Dundas, 53; Gossage and Bondar, 43-44; Patricia Power, "'With their feet on the ground': Women's lives and work in the Royal Canadian Air Force, 1951-1966" (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 1998), 91.

⁴⁴ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 7.

normally considered masculine (i.e. more physical and technical roles), the majority of labour performed by the WD remained in the field of “women’s work.”⁴⁵

To the frustration of many women during the war, flying for the RCAF was not considered “women’s work.” Throughout the Second World War the RCAF would not consider women for pilots training, despite an existing shortage of male pilots. Many qualified female pilots applied to the RCAF but all were rejected.⁴⁶ Canadian pilot Helen Harrison applied to the RCAF at the beginning of the war but says she was refused because she “wore a skirt.”⁴⁷ In an interview with Shirley Render, Harrison shared that the RCAF would not hire her as a pilot, despite having “2600 hours, an instructor’s rating, multi-engine and instrument endorsements, a seaplane rating, and the experience of flying civil and military aircraft in three countries.”⁴⁸ Harrison went on to become the first of five Canadian women to join the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), a civilian organization that was formed in 1939 to ferry aircraft from factories and maintenance units to active squadrons in Britain and Europe.⁴⁹ The ATA initially intended to only allow women to fly non-operational aircraft, but as manpower shortages increased female pilots were allowed to fly operational aircraft, such as Spitfires and heavy bombers.⁵⁰ Canadians Helen Harrison, Marion Orr, Elspeth Russell Burnett, Violet Milstead, and Gloria Large, along with the many British women who flew with the ATA, challenged assumptions that women were not fit to be military pilots. While in the ATA, they proved themselves equal in skill to men — some safely ferrying as many as ninety-nine types of aircraft during the war — but their

⁴⁵ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 68-69. The concept of “women’s work” in the context of the Second World War was first expressed by historian Ruth Roach Pierson in her book: *“They’re Still Women After All”: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc, 1986).

⁴⁶ Render, 77-78.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

contributions have gone largely unrecognised by history until quite recently.⁵¹ As Render writes, after the war it was “as if they never existed.”⁵² This disappointment was likely felt by most women who experienced expanded military opportunities during the Second World War. The three women’s services were disbanded when the war ended and the Canadian Department of Labour established training programs to encourage women to return to “pre-war traditional roles.”⁵³ The RCAF WD was disbanded on 11 December 1946.⁵⁴

Post War 1950s and 1960s

The post-war years saw the near complete disarmament of the Canadian military and few opportunities for women in the RCAF outside of the medical profession. This all changed in the early 1950s with the beginning of the Cold War. Canada sent men overseas once again to fight in the Korean War (1950-1953) and committed the RCAF to join the United States of America Air Force (USAAF) in establishing a radar system to defend North American air space against a potential Soviet attack.⁵⁵ From 1950-1955, three radar stations were built in Canada and the United States to accomplish this task: the Pinetree line (1950), the Mid-Canada line (1954) and the Distant Early Warning line (1955).⁵⁶ The Pinetree line was jointly run by Canadian and US personnel, the Mid-Canada line was Canadian run, and the Distant Early Warning line was US operated.⁵⁷ These stations dramatically increased the RCAF’s need for personnel and, on 21 March 1951, Cabinet authorized the RCAF to begin enlisting women into both the reserve and

⁵¹ Render, 111.

⁵² Ibid., 112.

⁵³ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 69.

⁵⁴ Sarah Hogenbirk, “Women Inside the Canadian Military, 1938-1966” (PhD dissertation, Carleton University, 2017), 188.

⁵⁵ Joseph T. Jockel, *Canada in NORAD, 1957-2007: A History* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 10.

⁵⁶ Power, 23.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

regular force to help them meet the demand.⁵⁸ “Radar,” as Patricia Power notes in her MA thesis, was “one of the prime reasons” for re-opening the RCAF to women in the 1950s.⁵⁹ Almost 2,600 women joined the RCAF in 1951, many of whom were recruited for the trade of Fighter Control Operators, a new trade integral to the operation of the radar defence system (for other trades opened at this time see Appendix 2).⁶⁰ “Fighter COps” monitored the Arctic and Canadian airspace for aircraft, watched for potential threats, and directed aircraft on their courses.⁶¹ It is likely that the onset of the Korean War in 1950 also played a part in increasing the need for personnel in the RCAF, although the only RCAF servicewomen deployed during this conflict were nurses.⁶²

Historian Karen Davis argues that the movement of women into the regular force in the 1950s was the “first of many changes” that would “close the gap between the conditions of service of women and men.”⁶³ While this was certainly a start on the path towards equality, the gaps remained quite large. For example, a servicewoman received the same basic pay as a man, but had to be 18 (as opposed to 17 for a man) and she needed a grade 10 education (while a man only needed grade 8).⁶⁴ Many policies directed at servicewomen reinforced the traditional gender roles of the time. For example, women in the RCAF received the same basic training as men but instead of weapons training, “active exercises,” and ground defence training, they had courses on

⁵⁸ Dundas, 96-97; Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 69.

⁵⁹ Power, 27.

⁶⁰ Dundas, 96-97; Power, 27.

⁶¹ Power, 27. The Fighter Control Operator trade was an amalgamation of the trades Radar Operator and Clerk Operations (Fighter).

⁶² Dundas, 100-101. The only servicewomen deployed to Korea (out of all the services) were nurses. Dundas explains that RCAF nurses were particularly valuable because of their aeronautical training. In 1951, the first nurses were trained in para-rescue, which had previously been restricted to airmen and doctors.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁴ Dundas, 96; Power, 31.

morality and personal hygiene.⁶⁵ In a bid to attract women, the RCAF advertised separate facilities such as cosmetic parlours.⁶⁶

Just as in the Second World War, the military in the 1950s and 1960s saw Canadian women as supplementary labour. Policies regarding length of engagement, marriage, and pregnancy reinforced the expectation that women were only temporary workers and would eventually return to the domestic sphere. To ensure high turnover, the initial engagement for a woman was set at three years, versus five years for men, and they were released from duty if they became pregnant or married.⁶⁷ There were a few exceptions by which a married woman could remain in the service: she could only stay if “married to an airman (not an officer), and if neither was transferred, if she did not become pregnant, or if her husband was not posted to another station.”⁶⁸ In December 1953, this policy was amended somewhat to allow married servicewomen to stay in the service as long as “her marriage [did not] interfere with her usefulness to the service.”⁶⁹ These policies may seem unfair to the modern reader. However, the RCAF was considered a promising employment option for young women (and young men) at the time, offering them highly technical training, the opportunity to travel, and many social freedoms they could not enjoy while living with their families.

Yet, it must not be forgotten that these opportunities were contingent on the RCAF’s personnel needs. When the RCAF opened its regular force to women, the Cabinet Defence Committee stated that the military’s policy on servicewomen was that they would be recruited to “fill vacancies for which it is difficult to recruit men” and to “build up reserve cadres [to] ease

⁶⁵ Power, 43.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁹ Karen D. Davis, “Organizational Environment and Turnover: Understanding Women’s Exit from the Canadian Forces” (MA thesis, McGill University, 1994), 14-15. Quote from National Archives File #393-98.

mobilisation problems.”⁷⁰ Once demand for personnel was reduced, the RCAF stopped actively recruiting women. In 1953, the RCAF had 3,133 servicewomen.⁷¹ By 1955, this was reduced to 2,500 and in 1962 they halted the recruitment of servicewomen altogether and put in place a ceiling of 1,000.⁷² There were two significant events that may have influenced this decision. First, in 1953, the Korean War ended and freed servicemen for other work. Second, in 1957, advances in radar technology led to the creation of the SAGE system (“semi-automatic ground environment”) and the Ballistic Missile Early Warning system, both of which relied on computers to operate, meaning fewer jobs were available for servicewomen at radar stations.⁷³ From 1958 to 1963, the RCAF reduced the number of trades open to women from 63 to 13.⁷⁴

In June 1964, the Chief of Air Staff asked the Labour Department for permission to phase women out of the RCAF completely.⁷⁵ This request was in part a response to a developing plan to unify the CA, RCN, and RCAF into one single service. Unification would amalgamate the separate administrative and support departments of each of the services, which would require a reduction in personnel.⁷⁶ To justify its request, the RCAF said women were too expensive to train.⁷⁷ There was some truth to this argument. Basic training was twenty-two months and women, on average, stayed in the service for thirty to thirty-six months (versus sixty for men).⁷⁸ High turnover had a large impact on the ability of the RCAF to staff technical trades that required in-depth training.⁷⁹ However, as touched on earlier, this problem was in part the fault of

⁷⁰ Dundas, 95.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁷² Power, 80; Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 70.

⁷³ Davis, “Organizational Environment and Turnover,” 15; Power, 70; Dundas, 102.

⁷⁴ Power, 80.

⁷⁵ Dundas, 103-105; Hogenbirk, 316.

⁷⁶ Hogenbirk, 316-317; Dundas, 103-105.

⁷⁷ Power, 80.

⁷⁸ Power, 81; Hogenbirk, 350-351.

⁷⁹ Dundas, 102.

RCAF policy that discouraged women from long-term service. Policies such as the limit on women's initial engagement, the prohibition on women serving if they decided to have children, and the dismissal of married women if their marriage did not fit within the strict guidelines, meant that many women were forced to choose between having a family and staying in the military at some point in their career.⁸⁰ As well, the 13 trades left open to women were roles with limited options for advancement so there were no real incentives for a woman to stay in the RCAF long term.

Servicewomen may have proved to be expensive, but no more so than when the RCAF required their service to staff radar lines in the 1950s. As Power notes, expenses that were once acceptable to meet personnel shortages were now “invoked as the main reason for...exclusion.”⁸¹ This case was just one more example of the military treating women as supplementary labour. However, now women were part of the regular force and could not be phased out without the Labour Department's permission. While waiting for that permission, the RCAF used attrition to reduce the number of servicewomen in the regular force. By 1966 only 530 servicewomen remained in the RCAF.⁸²

Part 2: The Process of Legal Integration (1966-1989)

Minister of Labour's Manpower Study

The Chief of Air Staff's 1964 request to phase women out of the RCAF sparked the first of many pushes to create a permanent place for women in the CAF. In July 1964, the Minister of

⁸⁰ Davis, “Organizational Environment and Turnover,” 15. Davis says that government records estimate that “between 1951 and February 1954, 6 airwomen were released for ‘misconduct,’ 266 were released for ‘inefficiency,’ 34 were released voluntarily on compassionate grounds, 56 were released as ‘medically unfit,’ (which included pregnancy), and 1351 were released as unsuitable for reasons other than misconduct, inefficiency or medical unfitness. The latter category included release for marriage until October 1952 when a separate release category was established for marriage.”

⁸¹ Power, 81.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 80, 87.

National Defence asked the Labour Department to refrain from giving the RCAF a decision until a review of the employment of women in *all* the services was conducted. He commissioned the Ministry of Labour to conduct the Minister's Manpower Study (Men), or MMS (M), a series of studies to "streamline and reduce costs in the Canadian armed services" in preparation for unification.⁸³ Of these studies, the "Employment of Female Personnel in Uniform — Regular Force" addressed the concerns posed by the RCAF and examined whether women would have a place in the CAF after unification.⁸⁴

In 1965, the MMS(M) determined that "biological sex by itself no longer constituted sufficient grounds for barring women from the armed services."⁸⁵ They argued that to do so would be "out of step" with economic and social trends in Canada's civilian workforce, where women were participating in greater numbers than ever before.⁸⁶ The study debunked the RCAF's claim that women were expensive, saying the cost of special facilities and uniforms were minimal and the benefits from their employment outweighed the costs.⁸⁷ With that, the Ministry of Labour formally rejected the RCAF's request and, on 20 June 1966, the Minister of National Defence and the Defence Council announced that servicewomen would be a "permanent" part of the future unified "Regular Canadian Forces."⁸⁸

The MMS (M) is perhaps the first step towards gender integration in the CAF. Servicewomen could now pursue a career in the military without the threat of being "phased out." It is also the first example of the military changing its employment policy in response to

⁸³ Hogenbirk, 306.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 318.

⁸⁵ Power, 82. Quote: Hogenbirk, 324.

⁸⁶ Dundas, 105; Hogenbirk, 325. For example, in 1956 the Canadian government enacted the Female Employees Equal Pay Act which was the first legislation that recognized women and men should be equally rewarded for their work (see Power, 21).

⁸⁷ Dundas, 106.

⁸⁸ Hogenbirk, 369.

government and social pressure. However, as much as it solidified a place for women in the military, the study also reinforced their secondary status. In a detailed discussion of the study, historian Sarah Hogenbirk reveals that the MMS (M) had “mixed benefits for women.”⁸⁹ Women were painted as a convenient “flexible force” — so long as they stayed single and did not get pregnant — that the military could draw on when men could not be recruited.⁹⁰ The study recommended that a ceiling of 1,500 be placed on the number of women in the military at any time (approximately 1.8% of all personnel) and that, in order to lower the cost of their employment and mitigate the impact of higher attrition rates, women would only be recruited to trades with short training periods or in trades where they were deemed “essential, preferred or equally suitable” to men.⁹¹ How these categories were determined was informed by gender stereotypes. For example, women were deemed “uniquely suited and essential as nursing assistants and flight attendants, preferable to men as clerks, and equal to men as dental assistants and supply technicians.”⁹² In the RCAF, women remained “preferred” as Fighter Controller Operators.⁹³ While the study led to some protections for married servicewomen, it also reaffirmed restrictions barring women from combat trades, clearly stating that this would be considered “inappropriate” in Canadian society.⁹⁴ As Hogenbirk writes, “the MMS (M)...reinforced gender norms even as [it] argued for a permanent place for women.”⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Hogenbirk, 371. For a more nuanced account and analysis of the Minister of Manpower Study and the “Employment of Female Personnel in Uniform – Regular Force” report see Chapter 5 of Hogenbirk.

⁹⁰ Dundas, 106.

⁹¹ Dundas, 102; Power, 8; Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 71.

⁹² Dundas, 106; Hogenbirk, 329.

⁹³ Hogenbirk, 330.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 326, 336, 371. Married servicewomen were allowed to “remain in the service” as long as it did not interfere with her job. This did not mean that married women did not continue to feel social pressures to leave the service upon marriage.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 371.

On 1 February 1968, the Canadian Forces Reorganisation Act unified the CA, the RCN and RCAF into one homogenous service: the Canadian Forces.⁹⁶ Unification placed all trades and occupations associated with aviation, including those in the navy and army, under the grouping of “air environment” and later under the leadership of “Air Command.”⁹⁷ At the time of unification, there were only about fifteen trades open to women (see Appendix 2).⁹⁸ For servicewomen in the RCAF, unification did not greatly affect their status in the military but it did mean that they could now access support roles in the army and navy environments.⁹⁹ In 1969, the CAF created a new position to oversee matters relating to servicewomen, the Directorate of Women Personnel (DWP).¹⁰⁰ The DWP advised senior leadership on issues relating to the “training, accommodation, welfare and morale, dress regulations and clothing, discipline, terms of service and employment” of servicewomen and was perhaps the “only line of defence and advocacy” for women in the CAF at the time.¹⁰¹

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada

While the MMS (M) was releasing its report, the government was also experiencing pressure from women’s organizations to address issues impacting women in Canada.¹⁰² In 1967, Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson announced the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in

⁹⁶ Milberry, 367.

⁹⁷ English and Westrop, 36. A note on names: with unification, the CA, RCN and RCAF became the air, land and sea “environments” of the Canadian Forces (a single service) and lost their individual names. Following unification, the organisation that was known as the RCAF became the “air environment” or “air element.” However, the air environment now also encompassed the aviation roles of the CA and RCN. The organisation we have today, therefore, is made up of far more trades and occupations than the RCAF pre-unification. In 1975, the air environment became known as “Air Command” until 2011 when the original name was reinstated by Harper’s Conservative government. In 2013, Harper’s government also changed the “Canadian Forces” to the “Canadian Armed Forces.” For more on the impacts of unification please see Chapter 4 and 5 of English and Westrop.

⁹⁸ Power, 90.

⁹⁹ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 78.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 72.

Canada to “inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps ...to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society.”¹⁰³

In 1970, the Commission released its report and made 167 recommendations, six of which were directed at the CAF.¹⁰⁴ These recommendations were as follows:

1. We recommend all trades in the Canadian Forces be open to women.
2. We recommend that the prohibition on the enlistment of married women in the Canadian Forces be eliminated.
3. We recommend that the length of the initial engagement for which personnel are required to enlist in the Canadian Forces be the same for women and men.
4. We recommend that the release of a woman from the Canadian Forces because she had a child be prohibited.
5. We recommend that the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act be amended so that [pension benefits] will be the same for male and female contributors.
6. We recommend that women as well as men be admitted to the military colleges operated by the Department of National Defence.¹⁰⁵

The Commission’s recommendations had a profound effect on CAF policy towards servicewomen and many scholars mark it as a turning point in the history of gender integration in the CAF. On 5 July 1971, the Defence Council released a new employment policy stating that “there would be no limitations on the employment of women” *except* in primary combat positions, near-combat positions,¹⁰⁶ remote locations, and in “service at sea.”¹⁰⁷ This policy removed the 1,500 person cap on the employment of women and by the mid-1970s, the

¹⁰³ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 72; Royal Commission on the Status of Women, “Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada” (1970), <https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pco-bcp/commissions-ef/bird1970-eng/bird1970-eng.htm> (accessed 15 April 2020), vii.

¹⁰⁴ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 75.

¹⁰⁵ Royal Commission on the Status of Women, 402. See also the discussion of this report in: Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 75; Dundas, 110; and Winslow and Dunn, 654-655.

¹⁰⁶ Dundas defines “near-combat” as a position that “may become directly involved in combat but whose primary role is other than combat.” See Dundas, 115.

¹⁰⁷ Dundas, 110; Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 78.

Department of Defence (DND) had opened 13 classifications and 30 trades to servicewomen and had made it possible for servicewomen to apply for various officer training plans (Appendix 3).¹⁰⁸ By 1971, the CAF also abolished restrictions on married women and women with children.¹⁰⁹ The Superannuation Act was amended in 1975 to make pensions equal for men and women.¹¹⁰

In the RCAF, the CAF's new employment policy meant that women could apply for the officer classifications of Aerospace Engineer, Air Traffic Controller and Air Weapons Controller, and for non-commissioned trades such as Air Traffic Control Assistant, Aero-Engine Technician, and Airframe Technician, but they could not train as pilots.¹¹¹ Women who chose to enter newly opened trades found that the burden of successful social integration was placed on their shoulders — they had to prove to their male superiors and colleagues at each stage of their career that they could “do the job” and even when they proved capable they faced resistance.¹¹² In her PhD dissertation, Davis describes the experience of one of the first female air force intelligence officers who, after being accepted into the security occupation in 1975, was told by her superiors that “if she did not “measure up” they would never let another woman into the branch.”¹¹³

Despite the loosening of many restrictions, the CAF staunchly maintained others. The CAF denied women entrance to military colleges, saying that there were no facilities to accommodate them and that they were “unsuitable” for the training offered.¹¹⁴ It wouldn't

¹⁰⁸ Dundas, 111-112. These were the Reserve Officers Training Plan, the Medical Officers Training Plan, the Dental Officers Program, University Training Plan for Men and the University Training Plan for Officers.

¹⁰⁹ Dundas, 111-112; Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 84-85.

¹¹⁰ Davis, “Organizational Environment and Turnover,” 17.

¹¹¹ Davis, “Organizational Environment and Turnover,” 16-17; Render, 316-317.

¹¹² Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 86.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Dundas, 112. For example, Dundas quotes an unknown CAF source as saying that women were unsuitable for ceremonial parades because it was “unbecoming” and “difficult in a physical sense for them to master effectively.”

budge on the issue of women in combat and placed multiple restrictions on the types of deployments women could participate in.¹¹⁵ In 1974, the CAF established a “male to people ratio” on all trades to “limit the proportion of women in each trade.”¹¹⁶ The reason for this was to mitigate the disproportionate responsibility of deployment on men created by the combat and deployment restrictions placed on women. The more women in a unit meant that the pool of members that could be deployed was smaller and so fewer men faced a greater likelihood that they could be called up to deploy on an operation.¹¹⁷ The CAF faced internal criticism for these policies, particularly by the DWP who stated that the combat policy in particular was “outdated” and that servicewomen desired both “equal opportunity” and “equal commitment” to their male counterparts.¹¹⁸ The combat policy also had an impact on servicewomen’s career prospects in the military. Without experience in an active operational unit, or in the combat arms, women found that they could not advance to positions of higher rank, particularly those in senior leadership.¹¹⁹ For example, the Chief of the Defence Staff, the highest ranking position in the military, has historically been chosen from a member of the combat arms. This was a significant barrier to the success of gender integration. Even so, CAF leadership would fight hard to maintain such policies for years to come.

The Canadian Human Rights Act

The decade following the Royal Commission saw a rise in the number of women in the CAF. In 1971 there were 1,600 women in the regular force.¹²⁰ By 1978, there were 4,786 women

¹¹⁵ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 88-90. These restrictions largely centered around appropriate facilities and amenities at the site of deployment.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹¹⁸ Dundas, 112.

¹¹⁹ Rosemary Park, in conversation with author, 6 November 2020.

¹²⁰ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 239.

(or 5.9%) in the regular force and 81 out of 127 officer and non-commissioned occupations were open to women.¹²¹ However, one third of all positions (40,000 in total) remained male only.¹²² The Royal Commission certainly motivated the military to amend its policies and recruit women during this period. However, as Davis points out, “the changing status of the women in the military was also due to the shrinking availability of male recruits throughout the 1970s.”¹²³ Just as in the Second World War and the post-war years, the CAF turned to women to satisfy a personnel need. In 1979, the Chief of the Defence Staff acknowledged that “[increased] enrollment of women might be necessary to meet its ‘manning’ requirements in the 1980s.”¹²⁴

On 1 March 1978 the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA) came into effect forbidding employment discrimination based on “race, national or ethnic origins, colour, religion, age, sex, marital status, family status, pardoned conviction and disability.”¹²⁵ However, the Act also stipulated that a discriminatory practice could be maintained if the exclusion was proved to be “a bona fide occupational requirement.”¹²⁶ For the CAF to continue to exclude women from ships, isolated postings, combat, and near-combat roles they had to prove women could not do the job “safely, efficiently, and reliably,” as was the criteria set by the CHRA.¹²⁷ Following the CHRA, the National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) conducted a review of current and potential employment policies on women across all environments. The 1978 NDHQ review rationalized why women could not be admitted to combat or near-combat roles and “[painted] a picture of an

¹²¹ Karen D. Davis, “From Ocean Ops to Combat Ops: A Short History of Women and Leadership in the Canadian Forces,” in *Women and Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Perspectives and Experience*, edited by Karen D. Davis (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 74; Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 85.

¹²² Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 105.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹²⁶ *Canadian Human Rights Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c.H-6), <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/H-6/>.

¹²⁷ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 91.

organization...already under considerable strain and pressure in its efforts to employ women.”¹²⁸ The CAF recycled its past arguments — despite the MMS(M) having disproved these arguments twelve years before — saying that women had limited employment flexibility because of pregnancy leave and co-postings with military spouses, that they were expensive because of their high attrition rate, and that they required special and duplicate services to men.¹²⁹ Women could not be admitted to combat roles because it would “inhibit the ability of the military to appear fierce,” may “undermine Canada’s military prestige in the eyes of allies,” create “sexual distraction” and may “impact the morale of men by challenging the machismo image” of combat units.¹³⁰ The NDHQ argued that the exclusion of women was an “operational requirement” because women would harm “operational effectiveness” and “unit cohesion,” which could prove detrimental to the safety of a unit in an operational situation.¹³¹ The RCAF was in agreement. In a 1978 report, Air Command went as far as to say that they “strongly supported the subordination of human rights to operational effectiveness” when it came to the exclusion of women from combat units as it was in the interests of “national security.”¹³² Outside the military, however, opportunities for women in the commercial aviation industry were changing. Immediately following the CHRA, Air Canada hired its first female pilots.¹³³

1977/1978 Opinion Polls

For the CAF to avoid changing its employment policies, it needed to do more than voice opposition. To get past the CHRA they needed to provide evidence that the exclusion of women

¹²⁸ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 92-93.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 95. The special services cited were women’s counsellors and separate living quarters. They also said that duplicate sports programs, training activities and training standards would have to be created and they would have to increase their inventories of female uniforms and sizes.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 94.

¹³³ Render, 220.

was a *bona fide* occupational requirement. Following the CHRA ruling, the CAF and DND conducted surveys and public opinion polls to get a sense of whether or not CAF members and civilian society would even support women in traditionally male roles. Following the Royal Commission, the CAF had said that it would continue to limit the employment of women in certain areas as long as these restrictions reflected public opinion, so this research was a key step in informing how the military would approach the CHRA.¹³⁴

In November 1977 and May 1978 Gallup Canada conducted opinion polls on behalf of DND. Participants were asked to consider women as aircrew, soldiers and sailors and, despite posing a slightly manipulative question in the 1978 poll (asking participants: “considering that war may result in injury, capture or death, do you believe there is a place for Canadian military women fighting alongside men?”), the results showed that just over fifty percent of participants approved of women in these roles (with two exceptions).¹³⁵ Women as aircrew received the most support, with 58% in 1977 and 63% in 1978, while women as soldiers gained only 49% approval in 1977 and only 52% in 1978.¹³⁶ Women as sailors got 50% of the public’s support in 1977 and 55% in 1978.¹³⁷ While the results demonstrated that public support existed, it was not an overwhelming ‘yes.’ In June 1978, the CAF published the findings of an internal survey they had conducted with 4,000 CAF members and their spouses regarding women in combat roles and at isolated postings.¹³⁸ Again, the majority of members polled supported women in aircrew.¹³⁹ The results also expressed that there was support for women in near-combat roles in all the

¹³⁴ Dundas, 110.

¹³⁵ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 104.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Davis, “From Ocean Ops to Combat Ops,” 74.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

environments but not for women in the combat arms or on submarines.¹⁴⁰ The majority of participants (with the exception of spouses) supported women at isolated postings but were mixed towards women at sea.¹⁴¹ With these results, the CAF saw that there was both public and membership support for expanding roles for women but there was still concern that operational effectiveness would be impacted if women were integrated into previously all-male units.¹⁴² To explore this question further, the CAF launched a series of socio-behavioural studies in 1979 called the Servicewomen in Non Traditional Environments and Roles (SWINTER) Trials to determine if women would impact the operational effectiveness of units in isolated postings, naval support ships, aircrew, and in army ground units.

The SWINTER Trials and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Section 15)

The SWINTER Trials were held from November 1979 until October 1985. The military chose 280 servicewomen to serve on a “trial basis” in positions considered to be “near-combat,” across all three environments.¹⁴³ Combat units were not included. The land trial took place in two field service units that supported land combat operations, the sea trial was on a single non-combatant ship where women served in a support capacity, and the aircrew trial had women placed into five transport and mixed transport/search and rescue squadrons.¹⁴⁴ A fourth trial tested the impact of women at an isolated communications station above the Arctic Circle.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 105; Davis, “From Ocean Ops to Combat Ops,” 74. Servicewomen expressed 80% support for women in near-combat positions, but only 45% supported women in active combat. For servicemen, 65% supported women in combat support positions but only 25% supported women in combat.

¹⁴¹ Davis, “From Ocean Ops to Combat Ops,” 74.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁴³ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 114.

¹⁴⁴ Davis, “From Ocean Ops to Combat Ops,” 76.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The trials were the first research conducted in Canada to consider the social integration of women in the CAF, and “the most ambitious study of the issue ever undertaken by a Western military.”¹⁴⁶ The trials assessed the ability of women to perform in certain roles compared to men, the effectiveness of mix-gender groups, the resource implications of integrating servicewomen into these units, and the sociological effects of women on unit cohesion, servicemen and their families.¹⁴⁷ According to Rosemary Park, the military psychologist who conducted most of the socio-behavioural research for the trials, the SWINTER Trials were a cautious response to the CHRA, involving only nine units overall and limiting women to 10% of each unit, making a meaningful study difficult to accomplish.¹⁴⁸ In fact, the trials were designed to prove that the CAF had a legal right to limit the opportunities for women according to the criteria put forth by the CHRA. As Davis writes, the trials were “intended to support CAF resistance” towards expanding roles for women.¹⁴⁹ To further this aim, assessment was designed so that “the only way the trials would be considered successful was if women managed to minimize any perception of change and participate in ways identical to men.”¹⁵⁰ If women were found to “safely, efficiently and reliably” perform their jobs, then “other assessment factors” were considered, such as the social and cultural impacts of their presence in the unit.¹⁵¹

The aircrew trial tested women in the roles of pilot, flight engineer, and air navigator. The RCAF also opened the trade of Traffic Technician but no women applied during the trial

¹⁴⁶ Major Rosemary Park, “Overview of the Social/Behavioural Science Evaluation of the 1979-1985 Canadian Forces Trial Employment of Servicewomen in Non-Traditional Environments and Roles,” Research Report 86-2, *Canadian Forces Applied Research Unit* (May 1986): 7.

¹⁴⁷ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 115-116.

¹⁴⁸ Rosemary Park, in conversation with author, 6 November 2020.

¹⁴⁹ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 115-116.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

period.¹⁵² Five squadrons were involved: 413 Transport and Rescue Squadron, Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Summerside; 424 Transport and Rescue Squadron, CFB Trenton; 436 Transport Squadron, CFB Trenton; 435 Transport Squadron, CFB Edmonton; and 442 Transport and Rescue Squadron, CFB Comox.¹⁵³ Women were also posted as pilot and air navigator instructors at three training schools: Canadian Forces Aerospace and Navigation School (CFANS), CFB Winnipeg; 3 Canadian Forces Flight Training School (3CFFTS), CFB Portage La Prairie; and 2 Canadian Forces Flight Training School (2CFFTS), CFB Moose Jaw.¹⁵⁴

Pilot training for the aircrew trial began at 3CFFTS at CFB Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, on 8 November 1979.¹⁵⁵ The first four servicewomen chosen for the trials were Captains Nora Bottomley, Deanna “Dee” Brasseur, Leah Mosher, and Officer Cadet Kris Hummel.¹⁵⁶ While Hummel did not complete training, Bottomley, Brasseur and Mosher became the first women to receive their wings for active duty in the RCAF.¹⁵⁷ A flight surgeon, Major Wendy Clay, had actually been the first female pilot to be trained by the military in 1974, but she was never allowed to pilot in an operational capacity.¹⁵⁸ Twenty-one women in total graduated from basic pilot training over the course of the trial.¹⁵⁹ Render’s book contains a detailed account of the pilot trial from the perspective of servicewomen, but little could be found in the secondary literature that speaks to the experience of women who were trained as air navigators and flight engineers, or who served as instructors.

¹⁵² Captain D.A. Saudino, “Attitudes Toward the Acceptance of Female Aircrew at Two SWINTER Trial Squadrons,” Working Paper 86-9, *Canadian Forces Personnel Applied Research Unit* (August 1984): 1.

¹⁵³ Lieutenant L.M. Phillippo and Major Rosemary Park, “Final Report of the Social/Behavioural Science Evaluation of the SWINTER Aircrew Trial,” Research Report 85-3, *Canadian Forces Personnel Applied Research Unit* (November 1985): 1-2.

¹⁵⁴ Phillippo and Park, 2.

¹⁵⁵ Dundas, 115.

¹⁵⁶ Render, 315.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 315-316.

The research conducted during the aircrew trial showed that male aircrew were generally more accepting of women in aircrew roles because women were already employed in the civilian aviation industry at the time of the trials.¹⁶⁰ Despite this acceptance, the recollections of female pilots involved in the aircrew trial showed that there still existed many of the same social and cultural challenges that servicewomen described when they entered newly opened trades in the early 1970s. For example, one woman characterised the transport headquarters at CFB Trenton as having an “old boys [club]” attitude and many of the men seemed to resent that women were posted there at all.¹⁶¹ As one woman explains, “the trial was not whether women could fly but whether men could accept us.”¹⁶² That being said, of the five squadrons, four achieved successful social integration while the other, 436 Squadron, was only “partially successful.”¹⁶³ Canadian Forces research reports written during and after the trials implied that the success of social integration was determined by a variety of factors, such as the amount of time squadron members spent together, a factor influenced by the type of work performed by the squadron (Transport versus Search and Rescue), the particular demands of the aircraft flown by the squadron (Hercules used by Transport versus Buffalo and Twin Huey helicopters used by Search and Rescue), as well as the attitudes of individual servicemen and women.¹⁶⁴

As the SWINTER Trials were nearing their end, a significant piece of legislation came into effect that created even more external pressure for the CAF to rethink its restrictive employment policies. The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* had been entrenched into the

¹⁶⁰ Major R.C. MacLean, “Equal but Unfair: The Failure of Gender Integration in the Canadian Armed Forces” (MA thesis, Canadian Forces College, 2017), 36.

¹⁶¹ Render, 323.

¹⁶² Ibid., 315-316.

¹⁶³ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 120.

¹⁶⁴ Saudino, 34-41. This report compares the results in 436 Squadron (Transport) and 424 Squadron (Search and Rescue). See also Park, “Overview of the Social/Behavioural Science Evaluation of the 1979-1985 Canadian Forces Trial Employment of Servicewomen in Non-Traditional Environments and Roles,” 18-22.

Canadian Constitution in 1982, but in April 1985 its equality clause, Section 15, came into effect. Section 15 stated that “every individual is equal before and under the law” and protected disadvantaged groups from discrimination based on “race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.”¹⁶⁵ The Supreme Court specified that Section 15 also prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation, although it was not specifically listed in the law.¹⁶⁶ The *Charter* meant that the CAF was faced with a similar situation as when the CHRA had come into effect, although it was now being challenged on its policy towards homosexuals as well.¹⁶⁷ As opposed to the CHRA, however, to continue a discriminatory policy that infringed on the *Charter* would be unconstitutional.¹⁶⁸ A Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights was formed to examine areas in Canada that may conflict with Section 15 and in October 1985 they released a report concluding that the CAF needed to lift all restrictions on the employment of women.¹⁶⁹

In response to the *Charter*, the CAF undertook many of the same strategies it had in 1978 to avoid changing its policy towards women. For example, the NDHQ established the Charter Task Force (CTF) on Equality Issues in 1986 to “review the impact of the *Charter* on CAF policies related to human rights, including the expansion of women’s roles, sexual orientation, mandatory retirement, physical and mental disability and marital status.”¹⁷⁰ However, as Davis

¹⁶⁵ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 112; *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Section 15, Part 1 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html> (accessed 15 April 2020).

¹⁶⁶ *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

¹⁶⁷ While the response to pressures to lift restrictions on homosexuals will not be discussed, the CAF used similar arguments to support their continued exclusion. The CAF argued that allowing people to be openly homosexual would negatively impact operational effectiveness and maintained restrictions until 1992. For more on this complex and troubling history, see Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces” (particularly 55-64, 83-84, 95, 113, 125-135, 137-151, 200-216). See also Sarah Fodey’s 2018 documentary, *The Fruit Machine*, which can be viewed at <https://www.tvo.org/video/documentaries/the-fruit-machine>.

¹⁶⁸ Duval-Lantoine, 36.

¹⁶⁹ Dundas, 123; Winslow and Dunn, 656.

¹⁷⁰ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 138-139.

notes, CAF leadership advised the CTF that its main goal was to “provide the evidence needed to ensure that the CAF would be exempt from Section 15.”¹⁷¹ The CTF used multiple research strategies to support the CAF’s agenda.¹⁷² For example, they developed research showing that women were more likely to be absent (due to pregnancy or childcare reasons) than men and used this to argue that women were “less committed” to serve in combat units, which could negatively affect “cohesion, morale and operational effectiveness.”¹⁷³ The CTF also conducted surveys of the Canadian public and CAF membership, but the findings of this research were less supportive of the CAF’s goals. In May and June 1986, two surveys of the Canadian public found that the majority of those polled supported women and homosexuals in the combat arms with some even saying that operational effectiveness may increase with their participation.¹⁷⁴ The CTF’s final report stated that the non-commissioned trades and officer classifications open to women should be expanded but that the risks were currently too high to move forward with social change, particularly in operational mixed gender units.¹⁷⁵ They recommended that further research be conducted to prove that “such change could be introduced without risk.”¹⁷⁶

On 4 June 1986, the CDS announced two new policies, informed by the CTS research and the results of the SWINTER Trials: Canadian Forces Administrative Order (CFAO) 49-14 and CFAO 49-15.¹⁷⁷ The former opened all trades to women “to the extent that would ensure a certain level of operational effectiveness” and the latter declared that certain occupations would remain exclusively male.¹⁷⁸ In the context of the RCAF, CFAO 49-14 significantly expanded

¹⁷¹ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 138-139.

¹⁷² For a more detailed account of the research developed by the CTF during this time please see Chapter 5 of Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces.”

¹⁷³ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 142.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

¹⁷⁵ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 140; Winslow and Dunn, 657.

¹⁷⁶ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 140.

¹⁷⁷ Duval-Lantoiné, 29.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

women's roles. Women were now "eligible for selection and training in pilot, air navigator and flight engineer occupations" with service on transport aircraft such as the Boeing 707, the C-130 Hercules, search and rescue aircraft like the CH-113 Labrador and CH-135 Twin Huey helicopters, and for utility and communications relay roles on the T-33 Silver Star.¹⁷⁹ For the navy, which had seen partial success in the trials, women would be allowed to serve on all naval vessels, except for destroyers, submarines, and operational support vessels.¹⁸⁰ The only service in which women did not see expanded opportunities was the army, where social integration had been deemed unsuccessful.¹⁸¹ The second policy, CFAO 49-15, instituted a "minimum male requirement" on some mixed gender units to ensure that the units would remain operationally effective in the event of a deployment, similar to the "male to person" quota in 1974.¹⁸² The order also stated that: "in order not to jeopardize the operational effectiveness dictated by the needs of national security, the composition of some units will remain single-gender male."¹⁸³ These units, not surprisingly, were combat and near-combat units.

The two orders were both a step forward and a step back for gender integration in the CAF. For the first time in Canadian history, servicewomen could train as pilots in the RCAF. However, they could still not be employed in fighter, transport or tactical helicopter squadrons that had combat or near-combat roles, as these remained single-gender male units.¹⁸⁴ Women also faced serious barriers due to the minimum male requirement, which could be used to justify their exclusion from certain units.¹⁸⁵ Full legal integration had not yet been achieved.

¹⁷⁹ Render, 332; Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 120.

¹⁸⁰ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 120.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* In most cases where integration was deemed unsuccessful, it was the result of social factors rather than the physical abilities of the women involved.

¹⁸² Duval-Lantoine, 29.

¹⁸³ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 149.

¹⁸⁴ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 157; Render, 333.

¹⁸⁵ Duval-Lantoine, 29.

The CREW Trials

The CFAO policies of 1986 did not mean that research into expanding women's employment was abandoned. Heeding the CTF's call for more research regarding mixed gender employment, in February 1987 DND developed a new series of trials to determine the impact of women on operational units: the Combat Related Employment of Women (CREW) trials.¹⁸⁶ The goal of the CREW trials would be to show "if, when and how restrictions on the employment of women in previously all-male occupations and units...should be removed."¹⁸⁷ In 1987, the army and navy began posting servicewomen to combat units.¹⁸⁸ The air trial was planned to take place at two squadrons in Cold Lake, Alberta where ten women were to be trained as fighter pilots.¹⁸⁹ However, in the summer of 1987 Air Command announced that it would not participate in the trials and would instead remove *all* restrictions on the employment of women.¹⁹⁰ Air Command offered several reasons for their decision. There was concern that, due to the highly technical nature of air force occupations, participation in the CREW trials would require the transfer of qualified servicewomen to all-male units and they did not have enough trained women to accomplish this.¹⁹¹ RCAF leadership feared that they would be forced to use women who did not qualify for the positions on trial, which could undermine the credibility of their established employment system and have a negative social impact on the units involved.¹⁹² Air Command concluded that "the perceived risks would best be reduced by opening all occupations and units to women...[allowing] training and employment to proceed without interference or restrictions

¹⁸⁶ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 156.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Dundas, 124.

¹⁸⁹ Render, 334.

¹⁹⁰ Dundas, 124; Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 157; Render, 334.

¹⁹¹ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 157.

¹⁹² Ibid., 158.

based on gender.”¹⁹³ They also did not see the benefits of training pilots who could only be used for support roles. If they were to put the effort and expense into training a pilot, then “all must be ready for combat.”¹⁹⁴ Air Command testified that the “nature of the air force” made the change in policy a “logical one.”¹⁹⁵

The 1987 decision was effectively a commitment to fully integrate women into the RCAF. However, Davis warns that the timing of the decision carried with it some drawbacks, evident in the RCAF’s intention of removing itself from the CREW trials:

...air force leadership made a commitment to move forward with gender integration, but was clear that this would be without quotas and without compromising selection and training standards. In effect, the air force avoided any obligation to ensure the immediate inclusion of women in previously all-male domains or subject their standards and processes to scrutiny through commitment to the trial process.¹⁹⁶

The RCAF was therefore under no legal obligation to promote and prioritise female recruits in male-dominated occupations, nor would it be required to adopt policies to smooth the social integration of women into such units. As Davis writes, “social change would be dependent upon individual women who requested employment in these units.”¹⁹⁷ Two such women were Dee Brasseur and Jane Foster, who completed CF-5 and CF-18 jet fighter pilot training in 1989.¹⁹⁸ They were the first female fighter pilots in the world.¹⁹⁹

There is evidence that the RCAF did undertake some efforts concerning gender integration following the 1987 decision. A report released by the Canada Human Rights Tribunal in 1989 (as will be discussed in the next section) identified that the RCAF had made a

¹⁹³ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 158.

¹⁹⁴ Render, 334.

¹⁹⁵ Human Rights Tribunal Decision, *T.D. 3/89, In the Matter of a Hearing before a Human Rights Tribunal appointed under Section 39 of the Canadian Human Rights Act* (Ottawa: Minister of Supplies and Services Canada, 20 February 1989), 19.

¹⁹⁶ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 158.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Render, 335.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

“considerable education effort among male members, developed a clear pregnancy policy, undertook further neutral or gender free tests of operational equipment needs,” and they “considered the effect of G tolerance on women.”²⁰⁰ The only information found that provided more detail on these developments was the pregnancy policy. According to Shirley Render, by the 1990s there were “no restrictions” on flying when pregnant; as she quotes Captain Mick Colton: “You officially stop[ed] flying when you and your medical officer [felt] the time [was] right.”²⁰¹ Further primary source research is required to flesh out the rest of these developments.

The Canada Human Rights Tribunal

As the SWINTER Trials were ending, the CREW Trials were taking place, and the RCAF was reforming its employment policies, the CAF was on trial before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT). In October 1986, the CAF was brought before the CHRT for a series of complaints the Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) had received throughout the 1980s alleging that the CAF had violated the CHRA. Four complaints were made against the CAF, two of which were associated with the RCAF. In 1982, a retired fighter pilot named Joseph Houlden complained that the policy to exclude women from flying fighter aircraft (and from combat roles in general) was discrimination against men because it meant that only men were subject to “unlimited liability” — the concept that members of the military can be “called upon to lay down their lives” in defence of the nation.²⁰² In other words, by excluding women from combat and near-combat roles, men were unfairly assuming all the risks of combat.²⁰³ In 1984, Katherine MacRae, a trained mechanic, complained that her application for a mechanic position in a

²⁰⁰ Human Rights Tribunal Decision, 19.

²⁰¹ Render, 237. The exact date of when this policy changed could not be found.

²⁰² Human Rights Tribunal Decision, 2. For a definition of “unlimited liability” see Allan English, *Understanding Military Culture: A Canadian Perspective* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 35.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

tactical helicopter squadron was rejected and she had been told by an air reserve unit that women were not permitted for enrollment in that trade, despite the occupation being open to women at the time.²⁰⁴ The other two complaints were from a woman who had been denied training as a marine engineering technician and from a clerk who had been denied a job because the minimum male requirement of the unit dictated that the unit had reached its maximum limit on women.²⁰⁵ In 1985, a fifth complaint was made by a commercial pilot named Georgina Brown who said that her applications for air force pilot and air navigator had been denied because of her sex.²⁰⁶

The Tribunal's Order was released on 20 February 1989. The CHRT concluded that the CAF no longer had "adequate evidence" to sustain the argument that excluding women from combat and near-combat positions was an "occupational requirement."²⁰⁷ Perhaps most importantly, they determined that "operational effectiveness" was a "gender neutral concept" and that "both sexes can aspire to undergo the training required to be operationally effective."²⁰⁸ This effectively quashed the CAF's main argument for the exclusion of women from any role. The Tribunal's Order made five demands of the CAF:

1. CREW Trials are to continue but are not to be regarded as trials, but as the lead-up or preparation for full integration, that is... as the first stage of implementation of a new policy of full integration of women into all units and occupations.
2. Full integration is to take place with all due speed, as a matter of principle and as a matter of practice, for both active and reserve forces.
3. ...the removal of all restrictions from both operational and personnel considerations; the minimum male requirement should be phased out; new occupational personnel selection standards should be imposed immediately.
4. There must be internal and external monitoring of the policy...

²⁰⁴ Human Rights Tribunal Decision, 2.

²⁰⁵ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 165.

²⁰⁶ Human Rights Tribunal Decision, 2, 3.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁰⁸ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 167.

5. The CAF and the Canadian Human Rights Commission are to devise a mutually acceptable implementation plan so that the integration of women proceeds...towards the goal of complete integration...within the next ten years.²⁰⁹

By October 1989, the CAF had removed all formal restrictions on the employment of women, with the exception of submarines (the restriction of which would be removed once the navy had vessels that would not violate privacy concerns) and Roman Catholic chaplains (a matter somewhat out of the CAF's hands).²¹⁰ The army and navy CREW Trials were abandoned, and with them the sociological and behavioural research that they would have produced — research that may have aided the CAF's efforts to achieve full integration over the next ten years.²¹¹ In July 1989, the CDS issued the “liability to serve” policy which gave servicewomen the right to enter the combat arms and share with their male colleagues the burden of “unlimited liability.”²¹² With the new policy, the last legal barriers to gender integration were removed. Women and men now had equal opportunity and equal commitment in the CAF.

The RCAF's 1987 decision to lift employment restrictions on women had a large impact on the CHRT's ruling. Regarding the air force complaints, the Tribunal determined that they were nullified when the RCAF changed its employment policy.²¹³ The Tribunal's report also

²⁰⁹ Human Rights Tribunal Decision, 33.

²¹⁰ Davis, “From Ocean Ops to Combat Ops,” 78-79. Submarines were opened to women in 2001 when new vessels were purchased that could accommodate women without violating privacy concerns. Catholic chaplains are ordained by the Catholic Church, so the restriction of women from being Roman Catholic chaplains was not due to CAF policy but rather church policy.

²¹¹ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 187.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 179. The new policy was confronted with an interesting controversy. It was “hotly contested” by many servicewomen who had joined prior to the CHRT ruling because many had joined with the belief that they would not be forced to serve in an operational capacity. There was also the fear that posting women to operational units could be used as a “method of forced release” in the 1990s, when it was likely that the woman would choose to leave the CAF rather than accept a posting she did not want. To read more on these issues see: Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 179-181 and 195-196.

²¹³ The exception to this was Katherine MacRae's complaint. The CAF said that the refusal to consider her application was due to an “administrative error” and she received a settlement in 1988 of \$9,893. Render notes that many servicewomen during the SWINTER trials complained of confusion at recruiting offices as to what trades were open to women. She interviewed one woman who “applied four different times before she was allowed to sign up for pilot training.” See Render, 317.

illuminates why the RCAF was allowed to carry on without quotas and oversight, a criticism that had been raised earlier by Davis. In its ruling on Joseph Houlden's case, the CHRT decided not to impose an affirmative action program (as Houlden had requested) because the RCAF had changed its policy freely. The CHRT determined that:

The Tribunal believes that the commitment of the air force operational commander, as given in testimony, to complete integration of women in the air force is an adequate and satisfactory guarantee that the force will not slip back into discriminatory practices as suggested by Mr. Houlden. The decision by the air force to remove all restrictions on women was based on careful planning, research and evaluation. The Tribunal has no reason to doubt the good faith and leadership of the force.²¹⁴

Whether or not that faith was misplaced will have to be a question of future research. What can be determined at this time is that the behaviour of the RCAF had a significant impact on the Tribunal and its ultimate decision that the CAF pursue complete integration. As evidence for its ultimate ruling, the Tribunal cited the RCAF's decision to allow women to train as pilots and fighter pilots as proof that barring women from operational units in other environments was no longer justifiable and that military attitudes were changing.²¹⁵ As we shall see, however, the order to fully integrate women into the CAF over ten years proved to be easier said than done.

Part 3: The Challenges of Social Integration (1990 to present)

With the Tribunal's Order that the CAF achieve full integration "within the next ten years," the year 1999 became a looming deadline. However, the decade between 1989 and 1999 saw little progress in terms of gender integration. In 1989, women made up 9.9% of the CAF and by 1999 this number had only risen to 10.8%, a less than one percent increase.²¹⁶ One year before the ten-year deadline, the Chief of Review Services (CRS) — an internal DND auditing

²¹⁴ Human Rights Tribunal Decision, 37.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 31, 33.

²¹⁶ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 239.

body — released a report that evaluated the CAF’s progress implementing the Tribunal’s Order. The June 1998 report, *Evaluation — Gender Integration in the CF*, found that the CAF had “achieved full integration under the narrowest interpretation.”²¹⁷ The CAF leadership claimed that they had complied with the Tribunal’s Order when they implemented the July 1989 employment policy giving women equal right and equal liability to serve.²¹⁸ However, the report found that the CAF’s approach to gender integration had been “uncoordinated “and “piecemeal” due to the fact that no one (not even the CHRC) had ever defined what “full gender integration” meant and how success would be measured.²¹⁹ The lack of a clear definition meant that the CAF could interpret it in whatever way they wanted to and the result was a lack of focus on policies that would ease social integration and address cultural and systemic barriers.²²⁰ As Davis argues, the CAF focused on “gender neutral” policies that did not address the “masculine heterosexual culture” of the CAF, particularly in the combat arms, and this meant that individuals who did not fit the masculine norm (women and homosexuals) had to “either develop individual strategies to successfully negotiate their participation and identity or leave the military.”²²¹ The lack of focus on cultural and systemic barriers made attracting women to the CAF, and retaining them, a difficult task.

The CAF’s response to the Tribunal’s Order’s started off strong in the early 1990s, but had dwindled by the middle of the decade, with a rather belated effort taking place only a few years before the deadline. In the last decade, renewed focus has been placed on the integration of

²¹⁷ Department of National Defence - Chief Review Services, *Evaluation - Gender Integration in the CF* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1998), <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.806624/publication.html>, i.

²¹⁸ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces, 236.

²¹⁹ Chief Review Services, 4.

²²⁰ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces, 236.

²²¹ Ibid.

women into the CAF.²²² However, the CAF continues to struggle to recruit and retain women in all the services. In 2011, the percentage of women in the CAF had increased to 13.7%, an increase of just under 3% since 1999.²²³ The representation of women in the combat arms specifically saw a proportional increase between 1989 and 2011, from 1% of the combat arms to 4.2% for combat officers and 1.5% of combat non-commissioned members.²²⁴ While comparable RCAF statistics for 2011 could not be found, the air force occupations did see a modest increase between 1989 and 2006. For example, the number of female pilots (excluding combat pilots) increased from 1.5% to 3.6% and for other “air operational roles” the percentage of women increased from 7.1% to 12.7%.²²⁵ As of 2006, women were still most represented in medical, dental and support roles. For example, in 2006 women made up 44% of the medical and dental occupations.²²⁶

The following will be an overview of major developments in the progress of social integration in the CAF from 1990-present. In terms of the RCAF’s role in this history, along with the particular experience of servicewomen in the air environment during this time, there has been little primary source research conducted to date. While the RCAF may have been the first to remove employment restrictions on women, it is likely (if the reader will allow the author to make an educated guess) that social integration was as much a struggle for the RCAF as it proved to be for the rest of the CAF.

²²² This renewed focus was, in part, the result of Canada signing the United Nations “Women, Peace and Security Agenda,” which required member states to commit to increasing the participation of women in their armed forces. See the article by Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic, “Smart Peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian Women for a Better Peace?” *International Journal* 74, no. 3 (2019): 405-421, for a discussion of the implications of the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda for women in the CAF.

²²³ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 240.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ Major Lise Bourgon, “The CF as an Employer of Choice: The Key for a Successful Gender Integration,” (Canadian Forces College Paper, 19 April 2007), 9.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

1990: The CREW Plans

The CAF's first action in response to the 1989 Tribunal Order was to remove all restrictions on the employment of women. Its second action was to implement the "Action Directive" in 1990. The directive required the army, navy and Canadian Forces Europe to develop plans for implementing and monitoring gender integration in the units that had been opened for the CREW Trials.²²⁷ These plans became known as the "CREW plans." As the RCAF had withdrawn from the CREW Trials, it was exempt from the Action Directive and it appears they didn't put much effort into constructing a plan at that time.²²⁸ As the CRS report pointed out, "the Air Force...did not recognise a significant imperative to give the issue more focused attention."²²⁹

1995: Operation Minerva

In 1995, the CAF launched *Operation Minerva* (also referred to as the *Nine Point Plan*) to address issues of social integration.²³⁰ *Operation Minerva* consisted of nine guidelines to achieve gender integration: (1) Reaffirm commitment by senior leaders regarding employment equity; (2) gender awareness training; (3) analysis of trends concerning women; (4) provide greater geographic stability; (5) facilitate discharge of family obligations; (6) modify recruiting methods by targeting women in non-traditional lifestyles; (7) ensure key position posting available for women; (8) encourage mentoring at all levels; and (9) target women in business and other government departments to hold honorary appointments and act as advisors.²³¹ The plan

²²⁷ Chief Review Services, i.

²²⁸ Ibid., 3.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Dundas, 138-140.

²³¹ Davis, "Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces," 225; Dundas, 138-140.

was progressive for its acknowledgement of gender-based systemic barriers to women's employment but none of the guidelines were implemented until 1998.²³²

1996: The Employment Equity Act

In 1996, the Canadian Parliament reviewed the *Employment Equity Act* and placed the CAF under its jurisdiction. As Charlotte Duval-Lantoine explains, in her 2019 MA thesis, “the revision of the *E[m]p[lo]y[m]e[n]t E[qu]ity Act* constituted a turning point in the pursuit of gender integration, since it...made the [CAF] directly liable for employment discrimination.”²³³ Unfortunately, the way in which the act was implemented demonstrates a problematic trend on the part of senior CAF leadership. To oversee the CAF's obligations under the *Employment Equity Act*, the CAF created the Directorate of Military Equal Opportunity, Policy and Planning (DEOPP).²³⁴ The DEOPP made gender integration the responsibility of a “desk officer” (at the rank of Major) who worked with three other Majors to monitor the files for “women, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, and Aboriginal people.”²³⁵ By making the implementation and monitoring of gender integration policy the responsibility of lower ranking officers, senior leadership signalled their lack of interest in seriously pursuing change (and the air force was no exception).²³⁶ Duval-Lantoine indicates that this issue was present in all the environments, to different extents. The *Employment Equity Act* has also been criticised for failing to require the CAF to challenge cultural and systemic barriers. Davis argues that it did not challenge the issue

²³² Duval-Lantoine, 59.

²³³ Ibid., 61.

²³⁴ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 215.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Duval-Lantoine, 139-140.

of gender-based resistance to women in units that still withheld the “combat masculine warrior values,” leaving the cultural barriers to integration largely unaddressed for most of the decade.²³⁷

1998: “Partnerships for the Future” and Recruitment Quotas

It was not until 1998 that the three environments presented official gender integration plans and recruiting targets to the CHRC. The RCAF plan was a five year plan called “Partnerships for the Future” that intended to “identify and eliminate systemic barriers to the selection and success” of women in the air force environment²³⁸ Other than a brief mention in Dundas and Davis, little more information could be found on this plan, but Davis notes that the plan was never implemented.²³⁹ In addition to the intended plan, the RCAF announced that it was setting a recruiting target to have women make up 29% of recruits that year.²⁴⁰ Similar targets were announced by the army and the navy; the army announced a target of 25% and the navy optimistically set its target at 40% that year and said it hoped to have women eventually make up 29% of the service.²⁴¹ In the context of the RCAF, it is unclear what strategies were implemented to increase the recruitment of women, and no data could be accessed that says if these quotas were met in the 1989-1999 timeframe. Considering recent data, it is likely that they were not. From 2017-2018, women made up only 17.2% of recruits enrolled in the CAF’s entire regular force.²⁴²

²³⁷ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 216.

²³⁸ Dundas, 148.

²³⁹ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 228.

²⁴⁰ Chief Review Services, 6; Duval-Lantoine, 61.

²⁴¹ Chief Review Services, 6.

²⁴² Government of Canada, “Recruitment of women in the Canadian Armed Forces,” <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces/recruitment-retention.html> (accessed 20 April 2020).

1998: The *Maclean's* scandal, SHARP, and the sexual assault hotline.

In May and June 1998, *Maclean's* magazine published two front cover issues reporting thirty-one allegations of sexual misconduct, including charges of rape, in the CAF.²⁴³ There were reports of sexual assault across all environments, and the RCAF was no exception. In the June issue, Major Dee Brasseur made the front page when she “revealed that she had been subject to rape, assault and harassment during her distinguished 21-year military career.”²⁴⁴ Brasseur was not the only woman from the RCAF to come forward; the *Maclean's* articles cite other women from the RCAF who spoke out.²⁴⁵ In response to the scandal, the Minister of Defence, Art Eggleton, responded with dismay, saying that the DND had no “statistical basis that would indicate that in the Canadian Forces [sexual assault] occurs more than it might in other places.”²⁴⁶ However, Duval-Lantoiné’s research shows that the CAF did in fact know of the issue but had done little to address it.²⁴⁷ In 1992, the CHRC had received 13 complaints of sexual harassment from members of the CAF, more than any other employer at that time.²⁴⁸ In 1993, DND had launched a study into sexual misconduct after the *Globe and Mail* had reported on the issue. The study showed that one quarter of servicewomen had been sexually harassed and 2.8% reported being raped or assaulted.²⁴⁹ Despite these statistics, the next five years saw little effort directed at addressing sexual violence.

It wasn’t until 1998, directly after the *Maclean's* scandal, that the CAF’s first sexual harassment training program was implemented. In 1998, the Sexual Harassment and Racism

²⁴³ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 229; Duval-Lantoiné, 160.

²⁴⁴ Jane O’Hara, “Speaking Out,” *Maclean's* (1 June 1998), https://archive.macleans.ca/issue/19980601#!&pid=0_1 (accessed 17 April 2020), 14, 21.

²⁴⁵ See: Jane O’Hara, “Rape in the Military,” *Maclean's* (25 May 1998), <https://archive.macleans.ca/issue/19980525#!&pid=14> (accessed 17 April 2020), 18-19.

²⁴⁶ O’Hara, “Rape in the Military,” 21.

²⁴⁷ Duval-Lantoiné, 134-135.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Prevention (SHARP) training program (which had been proposed as early as 1996 but was never implemented) was made mandatory for all CAF members.²⁵⁰ However, SHARP training was poorly executed, viewed as lacking “operational value” and as “canned sexual harassment training.”²⁵¹ It was “universally loathed by all personnel” and likely only succeeded in creating a negative opinion of gender integration among CF members.²⁵² The CDS also established a telephone hotline where complaints of sexual misconduct could be reported; between 1 June and 15 November 1998, the hotline received 279 complaints.²⁵³

2015: The Deschamps Report and *Operation Honour*

In 2014, sexual assault in the CAF was once again brought to the attention of the public when the Québec magazine *L'actualité* published a special exposé on the issue.²⁵⁴ Shortly after the exposé, the CAF mandated retired Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps, on behalf of the External Review Authority, to investigate the issue. Her report, the *External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces*, was released 27 March 2015 and it is the first document to make the connection between the failure of gender integration and culture within the CAF. Deschamps diagnosed the CAF as having an “underlying sexualized culture...that is hostile to women and LGTBQ members” and determined that there was an “undeniable link between the existence of a hostile organisational culture that is disrespectful and demeaning to women, and the poor integration of women into the organisation.”²⁵⁵ Of her 10

²⁵⁰ Duval-Lantoine, 151-152; Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 229.

²⁵¹ Duval-Lantoine, 151-152.

²⁵² Major Anne Reiffenstein, “Gender Integration – An Asymmetric Environment,” in *Women and Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Perspectives and Experience*, edited by Karen D. Davis, 1-10 (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 6; Duval-Lantoine, 151.

²⁵³ Davis, “Negotiating Gender in the Canadian Forces,” 229.

²⁵⁴ Duval-Lantoine, 210.

²⁵⁵ Marie Deschamps, *External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2015), i, vii.

recommendations, she stressed the need for cultural change in the CAF. A key section of the Deschamps report focused on cultural differences between the air force, navy and army, but it found that, while members perceived a cultural difference, there were “no substantive differences between the three subcultures with respect to the nature, frequency or severity of sexual harassment and assault reported to the [External Review Authority].”²⁵⁶ She further stated that “neither was there any evidence that the responses of the CAF to such conduct were better or more effective in any one particular service.”²⁵⁷

The CAF’s response to the report was to launch *Operation Honour* in August 2015, an initiative to “eliminate harmful and inappropriate behaviour within the CAF.”²⁵⁸ *Operation Honour* constitutes the CAF’s most recent policy on gender integration and culture change, but it has been deemed a failure by many scholars and is frequently compared to the abandoned *Operation Minerva* of 1995.²⁵⁹ In a recent report by the House of Common’s Standing Committee on National Defence, the authors point to the 2019 *Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces* by Statistics Canada which stated that “a reduction in prevalence of sexual assault did not take place between 2016 and 2018.”²⁶⁰ They also noted that, since 2016, more women are afraid of negative consequences if they report sexual assault.²⁶¹ *Operation Honour* is on-going.

²⁵⁶ Deschamps, 14.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Chief of the Defence Staff, “CDS Op Oder – Op Honour,” *Department of National Defence* (14 August 2015), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/operation-honour/orders-policies-directives/cds-operation-order.html>, 3.

²⁵⁹ Duval-Lantoiné, 213.

²⁶⁰ Standing Committee on National Defence, “Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces: Report of the Standing Committee on National Defence,” *House of Commons*, 4th Parliament, 1st Session (June 2019), <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/NDDN/Reports/RP10573700/nddnrp17/nddnrp17-e.pdf#page=57&zoom=100,0,937>, 20; Adam Cotter, “Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Regular Force, 2018,” *Statistics Canada Report* (22 May 2019), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-603-x/85-603-x2019001-eng.pdf?st=qnp8cGKT>, 56.

²⁶¹ Cotter, 56.

2017-Present: Strong, Secure, Engaged and GBA+

Despite the prevalence of sexual misconduct in the CAF, there are signs that some cultural change is occurring. The most recent 2017 Defence Policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged* promised to “place a new focus on recruiting and retaining under-represented populations...including, but not limited to women, indigenous peoples, and members of visible minorities.”²⁶² It also committed to integrate “Gender-Based Analysis Plus” (GBA+), an intersectional analytical tool intended to ensure government policies, programs, and initiatives are designed and implemented in a way that considers a diversity of identity factors.²⁶³ The impact of these new policies is perhaps best expressed by a recent Canadian Forces General Order, allowing CAF members “who express their gender as women” to wear ponytails, flats and show bare legs with skirts.²⁶⁴ While an order about ponytails may come across as superficial, the use of the phrase “express their gender as women” is a remarkable admission for an institution with a long history of upholding a masculine warrior culture. While an example such as this does not prove that cultural change has occurred, it is perhaps representative of a shift within the CAF to be more accepting of gender identities that diverge from the traditional masculine norm. Such a shift will be central to the progress of gender integration into the future.

Conclusion: Reflecting on the RCAF and Gender Integration

This report has suggested that gender integration has been a smoother process in the RCAF than in the other environments of the military. Why might this be? One factor is that there

²⁶² Government of Canada, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2017), 23.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Canadian Forces Logistics Association, “CANFORGEN 048/19 – Changes to CAF Dress Instructions Specific To Women's Service Dress,” <http://www.cfla-alfc.org/canforgen/canforgen-048-19> (accessed 1 December 2019); Jen Zoratti, “One small step for women in uniform: military's relaxed dress code a meaningful move in the right direction.” *Winnipeg Free Press* (15 April 2019), <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/life/one-small-step-for-women-in-uniform-508579282.html> (accessed 1 December 2019).

is a long history of employing women in the RCAF. As outlined in Part 1, there is a historical precedent for women's participation in the air force in greater numbers than in the navy or the army. Women were employed in Canadian airfields and factories during the First World War and in over 60 different air trades during the Second World War. Servicewomen in the RCAF were the first women to serve as part of a regular force in the Canadian military in 1951 and they were integral to the operation of the North American air defence system in the 1950s and 1960s. Part 2 demonstrated how women, during the SWINTER and CREW Trials, proved themselves equally capable to their male counterparts as aircrew and fighter pilots and were found to have little impact on "operational effectiveness." As a result, the RCAF was the first environment to achieve legal integration when it opened all non-commissioned trades and officer classifications in 1987. The accomplishments of servicewomen in the RCAF was a key consideration in the CHRT's ultimate decision to order the CAF to "fully integrate" women in 1989.

Another factor contributing to the success of women in the RCAF could be the parallel history of women in the civilian aviation industry, a history that was only briefly touched on in this report. Winslow and Dunn cite the Institutional/Occupational theory of sociologist Morris Janowitz (and later Charles Moskos) to explain why this history is significant. Janowitz observed that military institutions that are technologically convergent with civilian society tend to be more open to change.²⁶⁵ This is certainly the case with the RCAF and the commercial aviation industry, where technology and technical skills are shared. The commercial aviation industry's history of employing women in technical roles likely influenced the greater acceptance of women in air force positions that use the same skills. Another reason could be the physical distance of air force roles from the battlefield, compared to the infantry where soldiers are on the

²⁶⁵ Winslow and Dunn, 644-645.

ground. These two factors may explain why attitudes were more accepting of female aircrew in the 1977/ 1978 NDHQ and Gallup Canada surveys and during the SWINTER aircrew trial. By contrast, the army's combat arms — less technologically complex, closer to battle, and with no parallel civilian organisation — have struggled far more to integrate women.

This report has covered the history of gender integration from the Minister of Manpower (Men) study of 1966, when it was deemed women should become permanent members of the CAF, to the 1989 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, which ordered the full integration of women into all non-commissioned trades and officer classifications in the military, to the various initiatives of the 1990s and 2000s that attempted to address social integration. Legal integration was essentially achieved in 1989, yet the CAF still struggles to recruit and retain women despite there being no official barriers to their employment. As of February 2020, women are 15.9% of the total CAF (regular and reserve), less than a fifth of the total population.²⁶⁶ This suggests that the process of socially integrating women into the CAF — a process requiring the CAF to transform its culture — is still a work in progress. As illustrated in Part 3, the CAF has made several attempts to further the goal of gender integration but these have been plagued with a lack of follow through. Policies in the 1990s such as the RCAF's "Partnerships for the Future" and *Operation Minerva* promised to identify and remove cultural and systemic barriers to the employment of women in both the air environment and the CAF as a whole, but these policies were never carried out. It was only after the issue became front-page news (both in 1998 and 2014), that more attention was paid to addressing cultural barriers, with policies such as SHARP in 1998 and *Operation Honour* in 2015. Presently, new government initiatives, such as the 2017

²⁶⁶ Government of Canada, "Statistics of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces," <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces/statistics.html> (accessed 17 April 2020).

Defence Policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, which emphasizes diversity over masculinity as the key to operational effectiveness, and the GBA+ toolkit, are creating hope that the culture of the CAF is becoming more inclusive and accepting of difference.

Has the story of social integration been any different for the RCAF? Today women make up 19.5% of the RCAF, as opposed to 20.6% of the navy and 13.4% of the army.²⁶⁷ For perhaps the first time in the CAF's history, the RCAF is not the highest employer of women, which may speak more to the success of the navy in addressing employment barriers than any failure on the part of the RCAF. What these numbers tell us is that the culture of the RCAF (while perhaps no longer more accepting than the navy) has been better suited to the social integration of women than the army. However, as the Deschamps report suggested, *all* three environments have had issues with sexual misconduct. Women in the air environment have faced their share of cultural and systemic barriers to their participation, as expressed by women during the SWINTER aircrew trial and by women who spoke out against sexual misconduct in the 1990s.

There is currently not enough research to provide a detailed account of gender integration in the RCAF. The internal documents of the RCAF have received little analysis from historians. In researching this report, the author was left with many questions regarding the policy decisions made by the RCAF. What discussions led to the 1987 decision? What happened to the 1998 "Partnerships for the Future" plan? What efforts were made by RCAF leadership during the 1990s and 2000s to further the project of gender integration? There has also been little research into the *experience* of women who served in the various non-commissioned trades and officer classification of the RCAF over the course of this history. These experiences are likely to be diverse. The career of an Air Weapons Control Operator, a trade descendent from the Fighter

²⁶⁷ Government of Canada, "Statistics of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces."

COps, will no doubt differ from the career of a woman who served in a traditionally male dominant classification like Fighter Pilot or a woman who worked in aircraft maintenance as an Airframe Technician. The time period in which a woman served will also produce different perspectives — a woman entering the RCAF in 1970 will likely have experienced a much different institution than a woman entering in 1990. Some publications provide glimpses into these experiences. Shirley Render's *No Place For a Lady* — a history of Canadian female pilots — contains a fantastic chapter on the experiences of female pilots during the SWINTER and CREW Trials. However, few publications address the experiences of women in less well known air force roles. One exception can be found in Karen Davis's edited collection *Women and Leadership in the Canadian Forces*, which contains a delightful chapter by Major Deanna Manson on the history of female Traffic Technicians and Loadmasters and their service as part of domestic and operational Air Mobility Support units.²⁶⁸ It is the hope that more research like this will bring attention to the diverse experiences of women in the RCAF, particularly to women in often overlooked, yet equally important, roles like Traffic Technicians. Without further research into these areas, the history of gender integration in the RCAF will remain partially obscured.

²⁶⁸ Major Deanna Manson, "Canadian Forces "MAMS" — Mobile Air Mobility Support — Women Traffic Technicians at Work on Domestic and Deployed Operations," in *Women and Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Perspectives and Experience*, edited by Karen D. Davis (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 59-67.

Appendix 1

By the end of the Second World War, 67 trades were open to women across all the services.²⁶⁹

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Administration | Chef | Operator Medical Audit |
| AEM | Chef Hospital | Operator Telephone |
| AFM | Dental Assistant | Osteopath |
| Aircraft Helper | Dispenser | Parachute Rigger |
| Aircraft Recognition Instructor | Draughtsman | Pharmacist |
| Armourer (Bombs) | Driver Transport | Photographer |
| Bandwoman | Electrician | PT&D Instructor |
| Canteen Steward | Equipment Assistant | Radar Mechanic |
| Clerk Accounting | Entertainer | Radiographer |
| Clerk Engineering | Fabric Worker | Radio Telephone Operator |
| Clerk Administrative | General Duties | Safety Equipment Worker |
| Clerk C&C | GD Batman | Safety Equipment Assistant |
| Clerk Education | GD Standard | Service Patrol |
| Clerk General | Hairdresser | Specialist Mechanic |
| Clerk General Special | Fingerprint Classifier | Standard Tradeswoman |
| Clerk Library | Hospital Assistant | Tailor |
| Clerk Medical | Instrument Mechanic | Teleprinter Operator |
| Clerk Operations BR | Laboratory Assistant | Ward Mistress |
| Clerk Fighter (Ops) | Laundry Woman | Welder |
| Clerk Fighter | Link Trainer Operator | Wireless Mechanic |
| Clerk Flying Control | Meteorological Observer | Wireless Operator |
| Clerk Postal | Motor Mechanic (MT) | |
| Clerk Stenographer | Optometrist | |

²⁶⁹ Power, 91. Original primary source: "Establishment of Women in RCAF (Reg), RCAF (Aux), and RCAF (Res)." NA RG 24 Acc. 83.84/049, box 438, file 362.100.98, vol.2, Employment Airwomen, 21.08.1950

Appendix 2

In 1951, 12 trades were open to women in the RCAF:²⁷⁰

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Meteorological Observer | Fighter Control Operator |
| Supply Technician | Clerk (accounts, administration, typist) |
| Communications Operator | Aircraft Control Assistant |
| Dental Assistant | Medical Assistant |
| Tailor | Safety Equipment Technician |
| Armament System Technician | Communications Technician |

By 1955, 11 trades were added to those available to women in the RCAF:²⁷¹

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Driver (Light Vehicles) | Electrical Technician |
| Operator Punchcard | Instrument Technician |
| Laboratory Assistant | Radar Technician (Air And Ground) |
| Radiographer | Photographer |
| Security Police | Physical And Recreational Training Instructor |
| Parachute Rigger | |

Following the MMS(M) in 1966, approx. 15 trades remained open to women across all services:²⁷²

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Nursing Assistant | Flight Attendant (Speciality of Nursing Assistant) |
| Transport Operator (Light Vehicles) | Stenographer |
| Switchboard Operator | Operations Room Assistant |
| Naval Operations | Data Processor |
| Fighter Control Operator | Communications-Message Center Clerk |
| Teletype Operator | Medical Assistant |
| Dental Assistant | X-Ray Technician |
| Operating Room Assistant | |

*There is a slight discrepancy between the above and Davis, who lists only 11 trades as being open between 1967-1971. These are: Radio Operator, Administrative Clerk, Nursing Assistant, X-Ray Technician, Accounts and Finances Clerk, Personnel and Defence Co-Ordinator, Teletype Operator, Radar Plotter, Operating Room Assistant, Dental Assistant and Supply Tech.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ Power, 90. Original source: S.I. Evans S/L for Chief of Air Staff, Ceremonies and Celebrations – Anniversary of Women in RCAF, NA RG24, vol. 17862, file 853-13, Memo, 07.03.1961.

²⁷¹ Ibid. Original source: Research Branch, Library of Parliament, “History of the RCAF (Women’s Division) 1941-1971,” D.Hist 90-447, file 104 (1971), 3-4.

²⁷² Ibid. Original source: “Minister’s Manpower Study,” Report to the Ministry of Labour, D.His. 75-520 (1966) 149. There is a slight discrepancy with Davis (MA) who lists only 11 trades being open between 1967-1971.

²⁷³ Davis, “Organisational Environment and Turnover,” 14. Original Source: DHist: File 78/517.

Appendix 3

Unfortunately, a complete (and consistent) list could not be found in the secondary sources that shows the exact non-commissioned trades/officer classifications that were opened to women in the years from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women to the opening of all positions in 1989. The following is only a partial list of the officer classifications and non-commissioned trades opened in 1971 following the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (all services):²⁷⁴

Officer Classifications:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Aerospace Engineer | Air Weapons Control |
| Communications Engineer | Legal |
| Electronics Engineer | Logistics |
| Dental | |
| Air Traffic Control | |

Non-commissioned Trades:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Photographic Technician | Air Frame Technician |
| Air Traffic Control Assistant | Metals Technician |
| Military Police | Machinist Technician |
| Cook | Refinisher Technician |
| Aero-Engine Technician | |

²⁷⁴ Davis, "Organisational Environment and Turnover," 16-17. Original source was not cited.

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