



National Défense
Defence nationale

6007-4 (RCAF UMCC Secretary)

4 Feb 2025

RECORD OF DISCUSSION OF THE
RCAF LEVEL 1 UNION MANAGEMENT
CONSULTATION COMMITTEE 4 FEB 2025

Co-Chairs:

LGen E.J. Kenny, Comd RCAF

Ms. M. Simcoe, UNDE Rep

Members:

CWO R.J. Hansen, CWO RCAF

MGen C.A. McKenna, 1 CAD

BGen J.J. Alexander, Comd 2 CAD

Col S.J. Veillette, COS 3 CSD

Col A.E. Ferriss, Comd RAWC

BGen C.L. Robidoux, DGASRAR

Col L.L.J. James, D Air Pers Mgt

Mr. J. Potts, UNDE Rep

Mr. T. Zaharopoulos, PIPSC Rep

Secretary:

Capt C.M. Chandler, EA DGASRAR

Regrets:

MGen J.R. Speiser-Blanchet, DComd RCAF

BGen C.J. Horner, Comd 3 CSD

Mr. D. Richard, ACFO Rep

Ms. B. Stephenson, PIPSC Rep

Ms. J. Jobin, CAPE Rep

Ms. M. Olmstead, IBEW Rep

Invited Guests:

Col J.C.M. Charron, FAcT SME

LCol D.J. Ferris, FAcT SME

Ms. L.E. Wheeler, RCAF DEOS

Mr. R.K. Gupta, ADM(IE) D Contaminated Sites

<u>I. Opening Remarks</u>	<u>ACTION BY</u>
Ms. Simcoe introduced the in-person team and was looking forward to discussion. She noted that scheduling ahead of time would better align with the national meeting series. From the UNDE perspective, no major points except that bargaining is coming up. PSAC is starting their bargaining conference this month, and to prepare for proposals. LGen Kenny introduced the military members and thanked everyone for their attendance. Regretfully he was unable to attend the last RCAF Union Management Consultation Committee (UMCC) but attended the National UMCC earlier in January, which was an overall positive meeting. The main topic discussed was the return-to-work policy and any reductions in Public Service (PS) size. LGen Kenny concurred with Ms. Simcoe regarding scheduling and intends to have the RCAF UMCC prior to the National UMCC. LGen Kenny continued to note the RCAF is on the path of growth, aligned with Our North Strong and Free. Regarding remote workdays, the main discussion was the interpretation of holidays and impact to number of days in office. The changing security situation underpins the need to protect Canadian citizens and government, irrespective of the government in office. We are still concerned with conflict in Ukraine, and the approach by Russia to circumvent the international rules-based order. Russia continues to be a capable force, however China is on a path towards growth. China has increasingly focused on intercepting aircraft and defending their straits. We are focused on continental defence – the defence policy update has helped channel growth towards how to better protect Canada, but even more specifically the Canadian Arctic. The Canadian Arctic has increased emphasis for defence, and aligned with CDS direction, we need to develop a ready, resilient and relevant force that is able to fight a peer adversary by the end of the decade. This initiative is driving recruitment that will fill our empty military positions. The RCAF is currently on track for a 10% increase and aiming for a 40% increase next year. Exponential growth has started to occur, and we anticipate this to continue into next year. New positions are still coming, such as the security force for CF-35 and staffing of 3 CSD in Ottawa. Most of the growth upcoming is focused on projects, but the RCAF will see a shift towards growth at the	Nil

Wings as these capabilities come online. The execution of continental defense by 2028 is the driving force of RCAF modernization.

LGen Kenny continued to note the quantity of discussion regarding Canadian defence spending. He emphasized reminding members that despite the changes politically, our job and role does not change. New governments form, democracy runs its course, and the CAF follows at the lead of the Canadian government.

LGen Kenny stressed the advocacy by the DM and CDS for the foundational aspects of a *ready* force; increases in funding to infrastructure and repairs has been received and will be phased over 20 years. Funding was also received for Residential Housing Units. Funding for national procurement was also of note which underpins the parts and contracts of RCAF fleets, due to the age and lack of parts for various platforms. More funding is planned.

Funding was also approved for PS positions because of the Defence Policy Update. The RCAF requested funding for new positions, but not all were approved. An escalation factor to the RCAF budget was also included, and consideration of topping up certain RCAF projects. LGen Kenny noted that in 2035 these modernization projects and infrastructure changes will come to fruition at RCAF Wings, and the decisions made now are crucial.

Onboarding new platforms will not fix Wing infrastructure problems, and the funding is not nearly enough. RCAF modernization is occurring as one team; the RCAF needs the continuity, knowledge and expertise of PS employees. There will be challenges, like the Future Aircrew Training Program (FAcT) for example, that will change the way we do business because it's a different employment model. The RCAF needs to consider how the workforce changes over time, maximizing the integration of experts. The RCAF does not want to decrease the PS, however it does need to determine how we employ PS employees in a different way to support RCAF modernization. LGen Kenny aims to ensure that the modernized RCAF is as lethal as possible.

LGen Kenny noted the development of a new RCAF Security Force to secure the CF-35. These are just examples of our current growth mindset, but the PS positions are still being discussed as to where they go to ensure that projects remain on

time.	
II. <u>Review of previous ROD (May 24)</u>	<u>ACTION BY</u>
Col James conducted a review of the previous ROD and introduced the meeting agenda. There were no follow-up points from the previous ROD.	Nil.
III. <u>Agenda Item #1: FTE Staffing Vacancies / SWE Overview</u>	<u>ACTION BY</u>
Col James provided an update on the RCAF Public Servant workforce staffing. He reported the in/out flow of PS employees, to include all types of employment (student, full-time, etc.). The data presented (Annex A, slide 6) showed a slight decline in total workforce from 2020-2023, and a growth of 29 employees in 2023-2024. LGen Kenny shared that from the military perspective, we have been comparing the 2019/2020 statistics from the COVID-19 pandemic to now. In 2020, the RegF was within 500 personnel of the establishment, that same year the RCAF brought in 400 personnel and had 800-900 leave; the RCAF saw a significant decline in Trained Effective Strength (TES). Following the pandemic, some members weren't sure what was going to happen, so they stayed, and then in 2021-23 attrition rates were higher because release rates had become additive, while still under-recruiting. Last fiscal year was the first time the RCAF gained more personnel than released; an increase of 15 personnel overall. This year, the RCAF expects to grow by ~75 personnel. Col James briefed the RCAF SWE allocation for FY24/25 (Annex A, slide 7); the data presented was from 30 Jan 2025. Col James transitioned to discussion on staffed positions vice vacancies within the RCAF (indeterminate positions displayed only). Col James highlighted that C Air Force had the highest proportion of indeterminate vacancies for funded positions, however noted that there is an ongoing effort adjust its structure. He continued by outlining the challenges to staffing from HR Civ. These included lengths of timelines for staffing, security clearance delays, labour market, qualified candidates meeting essential qualifications, ability to create local pools and a decrease in overall numbers (retirement, employee departures).	Nil.

Ms. Simcoe noted the length of time it takes to hire in vacant positions. In the RCAF L2s it was clear they were able to fill their vacant positions without delays which was good news. She highlighted concerns regarding educating the L3/L4 units on staffing vacancy reports. An on-going effort with L2s is creating a standard to clearly outline how long the position has been vacant. The end goal of the reports is to determine *why* these positions are vacant (is the position still required, funding implications etc.). The follow-on concerns highlight the method to filling the position (internal/external process). It has been noted that some managers are not aware of the positions they have, and which ones are vacant. This has and will continue to be an on-going concern as the establishment modernizes. As trade-offs occur for projects and new positions, there is concern that they may be pulled from already funded positions and the process to which this will occur. Communicating this to current PS employees will be key to ensuring this is not messaged as workforce adjustments or replacement with contracting.

Mr. Zaharopoulos added that PIPSC was concerned about getting these positions staffed over time and noted significant vacancies of positions across the country. Increased workloads due to these vacancies is magnifying the effect and causing employees to leave. At lower echelons (L3/L4), employees are under the impression that there is no funding for additional employees which results in limited efforts to hire additional personnel. He reported a possible communication issue in ensuring DND is on the same page throughout the organization.

Col Neta commented that from a 1 CAD perspective, these were concerns they shared. MGen McKenna noted that the RCAF is almost 2000 personnel short; the challenge is building the capacity to execute essential staffing actions required to build human capacity – a continuous and related cycle.

LGen Kenny mentioned that there is a fixed salary and wage envelope (SWE); discussion at the local level is often at the edge of this limit. He recognized the difficulty in planning when the funding stream has not been secured. Due to the nature of retirements and departures, there will always be vacancies shown on the statistics, as during the hiring period after an employee leaves the position will show as vacant. He continued to highlight that security clearance delays have been a significant issue from a military perspective; the VCDS recently endorsed an increase in hiring PS personnel specifically for security clearance processing. This hiring is supported by additional

funding for new positions. Challenges in the labor market regarding changes to Official Language policy will also continue to be of concern. LGen Kenny noted that we must be mindful and transparent about how the RCAF is modernizing, especially while onboarding projects and reshaping our workforce types.

Mr. Potts inquired about possible trends that have been found within the vacancies regarding certain positions/job-types that remain unfilled. BGen Robidoux added that rare/exquisite skillsets (ex. Space) compounded with language profile requirements have often resulted in significant hiring delays (6/9/12 months). Col James concurred with this trend.

Col Ferris shared that the RCAF AWC vacancies are in the electronic warfare space; specifically, engineers that have the appropriate background for the respective position. They have reviewed pools of candidates and unfortunately many personnel do not meet the requisite background.

MGen McKenna concurred with Col Ferris' comments about specific technical backgrounds that are difficult to fill due to the level of expertise. As a result of 1 CAD's geographical span it does not have a uniform workforce to draw from; each region has its benefits/shortfalls. This challenge will be magnified when layered with the security clearance approval latency, as many of the RCAF's modernization plans will be underpinned by a larger civilian workforce with increased security clearance requirements.

LGen Kenny noted that citizenship will be a factor when considering clearance requirements, and this effect is already being noted from a military perspective.

Mr. Zaharopoulos noted that finding qualified employees that have a desire to work for DND will continue to be a challenge because salaries are comparatively less than their private sector equivalents. Motivating / reaching out to prospective applicants to share the exciting projects coming for the RCAF would help. Pay should be reviewed in general, but in particular will continue to affect IT and engineering applicant pools.

LGen Kenny shared that the RCAF Attractions Team is helping promote this message. He concurred that pay will continue to be an issue overall; cost of living and housing are of serious universal concern.

Ms. Simcoe added that management should continue to acknowledge the issue of recruiting and retaining members because of pay disparity with the private sector, in order to clearly communicate a consistent message.	
IV. <u>Agenda Item #2: FacT Program Updates</u>	<u>ACTION BY</u>
Ms. Simcoe shared that concerns around PS involvement in the FAcT program development have been voiced at previous meetings, specifically regarding overall funding and facilities maintenance issues. Ms. Simcoe was aware that an Operational Implementation Working Group (OIWG) meeting was held recently but has still not been engaged to participate. Mr. Zaharopoulos supported Ms. Simcoe's points that they want to be informed and engaged early. LCol Ferris participated as a FAcT SME. He shared that the 15/17 Wing analysis is still on-going, and that the PS footprint will be programmatic to support 2 timelines as the transition will not line up perfectly. He continued to highlight that Union representatives and WComds are interfacing locally to communicate higher when required. The program is still in its early stages, with approximately 5 years to go. Changes to CFTS/NFTC could occur as early as mid-2029, with changes to the PS occurring in 2027 when NFTC funding changes. 15/17 Wg are working towards developing a transition plan within the next year. Ms. Simcoe stated that engagements between union representatives and WComds on this topic have not been effective, as they are told no new information has been received until the process gets to their level. The L1 has endorsed union involvement but this still has not occurred to date. BGen Alexander explained that there are still unknowns to the details of the contract with SkyAlyne. The transition away from CFTS/NFTC will change the application of contract requirements. Building ownership will be a factor, as contractor owned facilities may not allow DND to determine employment in facilities maintenance. LGen Kenny directed 2 CAD to organize a consultation with the applicable parties on FAcT (15/17 Wg, 2 CAD, Union Representatives), and for the meeting to occur before summer 2025.	2 CAD – facilitate consultation with union representatives on FAcT program progression before summer 2025.

<u>V. Agenda Item #3: Environmental Concerns</u>	<u>ACTION BY</u>
Ms. Simcoe shared that PS employees at 15 Wg provided reports to local MPPs on the environmental contamination on the wing. The 15 Wg Comd has been supportive throughout the reporting process, addressing concerns, facilitating internal testing, etc. She informed the group that additional testing will be occurring later in February for PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances). Ms. Simcoe expressed concern about formally sharing contamination issues with PS employees in reference to the Right to Know legislation. Mr. Gupta has provided information for 15 Wg by means of reports, a plain language summary and a Question/Answer guide on this topic. Co-chairs of the 15 Wg Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Committee are reviewing these products, and they expect to be finalized mid-March. Ms. Wheeler confirmed that Right to Know legislation was included in Mr. Gupta's Question/Answer guide. Mr. Potts noted that awareness of 8-9 contaminated sites and inquired at which point in the process are PS employees informed about the issue. Mr. Gupta explained that the department's responsibility to provide awareness of the issue when the contaminated site is categorized as a hazard. The corresponding report for 15 Wg indicates the site is not a hazard. Ms. Simcoe suggested that we should ensure employees are adequately informed about their workplace, and this could occur during local Health and Safety meetings while utilizing the published report. Ms. Wheeler will engage Wing Environmental Officers to ensure appropriate communication with Wing OH&S Committees.	Ms. Wheeler – Coordinate 15 Wg environmental Officer engagement with Wing Health and Safety Committee.
<u>VI. Agenda Item #4: Uncover the Cost</u>	<u>ACTION BY</u>
Ms. Simcoe highlighted the special project efforts conducted by Ms. Elanor Sherlock to determine the actual cost of contractor use, specifically in cases where the original contract obligation is not fulfilled. Mr. Potts continued to share that there are business cases that show it would be cheaper to use PS employees, however the associated manager (ex. Wg Comd) does not have the available SWE. LGen Kenny noted this was discussed at the National UMCC, however there are limited amounts of PS positions and SWE that	Nil.

managers must work with. The RCAF has submitted an increased demand and advocated for additional PS positions/SWE, however unfortunately other means must be considered when requests are not approved.	
<u>VII. Agenda Item #5: EEDI & Culture</u>	<u>ACTION BY</u>
Col James provided a brief overview of the updates to the RCAF's Culture Evolution Implementation Plan and the DND EEDI Plan, released Jan 2025. He highlighted the four areas of concentration (Annex A, slide 12). Col James continued by advocating for notifying managers and employees to support the development of deliberate career progression. Ms. Simcoe shared that UNDE is promoting self-identification and was supportive of the EEDI Plan. Ms. Simcoe and Mr. Potts agreed promoting conversation regarding PS career succession planning is beneficial for all. Mr. Zaharopoulos pointed out that there should be increased open discussion on mental health and disabilities. Promoting open conversations will help change our culture.	Nil.
<u>VIII. Round Table</u>	<u>ACTION BY</u>
a. UNDE • No points. b. PIPSC • No points. c. 1 CAD • No points. d. 2 CAD • No points e. 3 CSD • No points. f. RCAF AWC • No points. g. AS • No points.	Nil.

<u>IX. Closing Remarks</u>	<u>ACTION BY</u>
Ms. Simcoe voiced appreciation for the open and honest conversation, and receipt of Union concerns. LGen Kenny closed by noting the importance of transparency and the direct linkage to building trust within the organization. He highlighted that a resolution on consulting union representatives regarding the FAcT program is required before the next meeting. The next RCAF L1 UMCC meeting will take place in the early summer (June).	DGASRAR – Coordinate next L1 UMCC.

E.J. Kenny
LGen
Comd RCAF
UMCC Co-chair

M. Simcoe
Civ
Labour Rep
UMCC Co-chair

Annex A – RCAF UMCC 4 Feb Presentation

Distribution List

External

1 CAD HQ//Comd/COS/A1/A8/HQ CO/Div CWO
2 CAD HQ//Comd/COS/A1/A8/HQ CO/Div CWO
3 CSD HQ//Comd/DComd
RCAF AWC HQ//Comd/COS/UNDE Representative
PIPSC Representative
CAPE Representative
ACFO Representative
IBEW Representative
ADM (HR-Civ) Labour Relation LO

Internal

RCAF HQ//DComd/RCAF CWO/DGASRAR/DGAS Rdns/COS/D Air Pers Mgt