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Evaluation of the Canadian Armed Forces Strategy to Achieve Fundamental Change for the Reserve Force

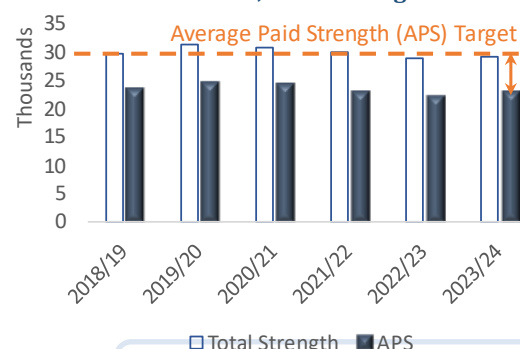
Evaluation of the New Vision for the Reserve Force

This evaluation was conducted between March 2023 and November 2024, when the New Vision for the Reserve Force was being drafted and approved. A developmental evaluation approach was applied to clarify the New Vision's objectives, assess its relevance to the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) general objectives and identify the potential challenges with implementation, particularly in relation to the Primary Reserve.

Canadian Reserve Force

The Reserve Force is one of the components of the CAF, in addition to the Regular Force, and comprises four distinct sub-components: the Primary Reserve, the Canadian Rangers, the Cadet Organizations Administration and Training Service and the Supplementary Reserve. The Primary Reserve carries out several roles within the CAF including, but not limited to, participating in training, filling institutional roles and carrying out operations within Canada and abroad.

The Primary Reserve has yet to reach its 30,000 APS target



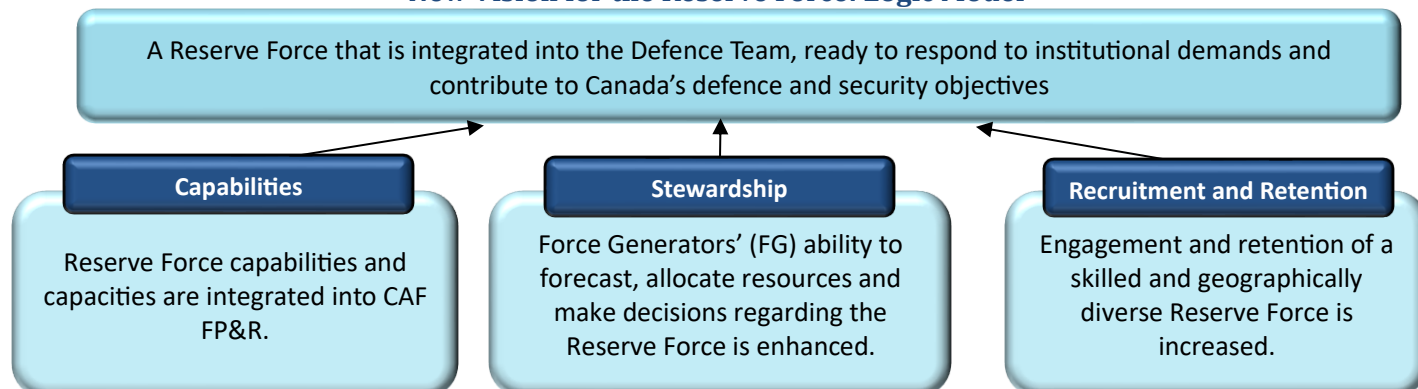
CAF Challenges and the Role of the Reserve Force

In the New Vision, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) notes a greater contribution from the Reserve Force is needed to achieve the CAF's operational outputs. The Regular Force faces mounting pressure to concurrently execute its assigned or implied missions. The Reserve Force must be integrated into CAF Force Posture and Readiness¹ (FP&R) planning in order to contribute to maximizing the operational output of the CAF and prepare for large-scale mobilization. While the Reserve Force is not integrated into such planning efforts, the latest FP&R directive identified this need.

About the New Vision for the Reserve Force

The New Vision outlines the CDS's intention to fundamentally change the Reserve Force and make its contribution to Canada's defence and security objectives more effective. Such change focuses on three key areas:

New Vision for the Reserve Force: Logic Model



¹ FP&R can be described as the level of CAF preparedness for military operations.

Key Takeaways

1. The Reserve Force is not currently integrated into the CAF's FP&R planning.
2. While there is support for the development of new, enhanced and specific capabilities for Primary Reservists, stakeholders are less supportive of assigning unique capabilities to the Reserve Force and holding capabilities in reserve (i.e., at a lower state of readiness).
3. A complex Reserve Force policy environment and insufficient Reserve data could limit the CAF's ability to effectively plan and allocate Reserve Force resources.
4. The New Vision seeks to address the recruitment and retention challenges unique to the Reserve Force that are not incorporated into larger CAF initiatives.

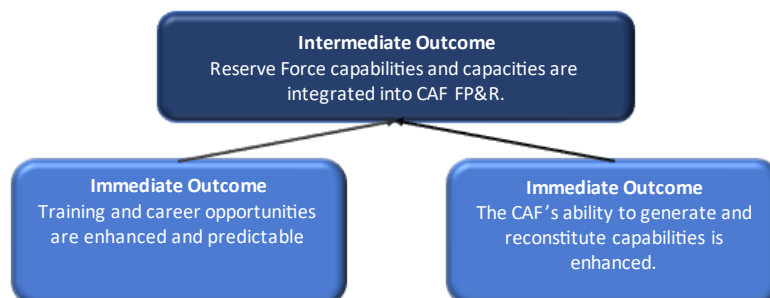
Overall Assessment

The New Vision calls for relevant and necessary improvements to the Reserve Force, particularly in the areas of capability allocation, policies and data alignment, as well as recruitment and retention for the Primary Reserve. However, without an overarching plan that matches the CDS's strategic intent for the integration of the Reserve Force into CAF FP&R, there remains a risk that efforts to address Reserve Force challenges will remain inconsistent across the CAF. The New Vision, together with a clearly defined role for the Reserve Force, will ensure the Primary Reserve can support the CAF in achieving Canada's defence and security objectives.

Capabilities

Theory of Change

The New Vision calls for the development of Reserve Force capabilities. This will allow for predictability of Reserve training and service. It will also enhance the CAF's ability to generate capabilities. Reserve Force capabilities must be integrated into CAF FP&R so they can contribute to Canada's defence and security objectives.

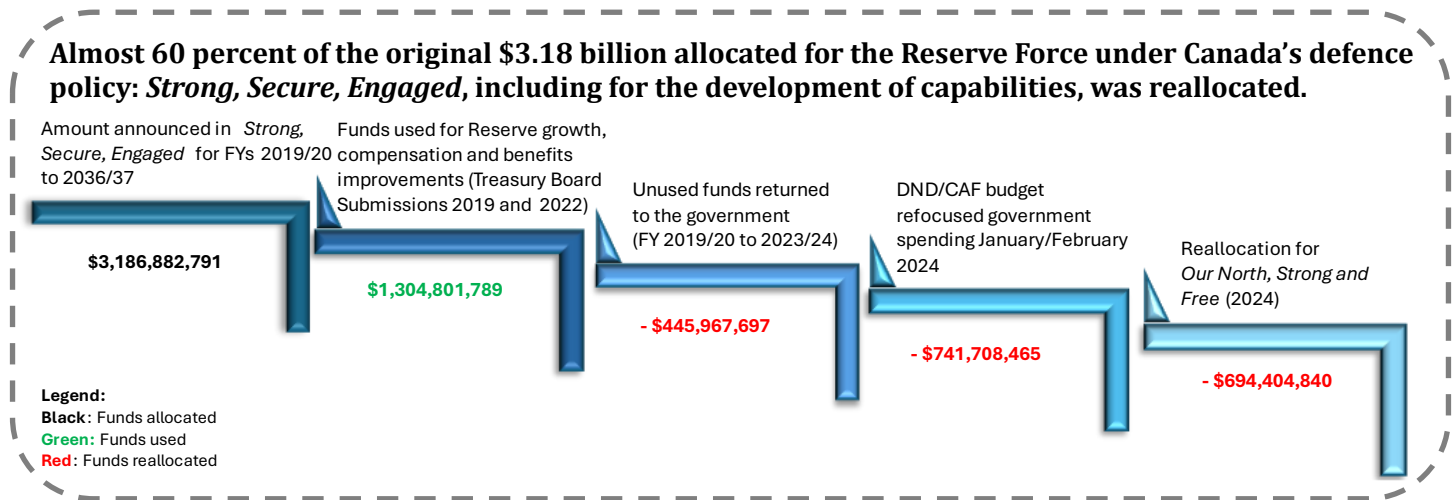


Key Takeaway 1: The Reserve Force is not currently integrated into the Canadian Armed Forces' Force Posture and Readiness planning.

The New Vision calls for the Reserve Force to be integrated into FP&R planning, which is needed to determine what capabilities should be taken on by the Reserve Force. This objective is at risk due to a lack of funding prioritization and a continued lack of resources for the planning and development of Reserve Force capabilities. As a result, the CAF will have to provide other incentives to encourage the various military environments to develop capabilities for the Reserve Force that go beyond filling vacant positions on an individual basis.

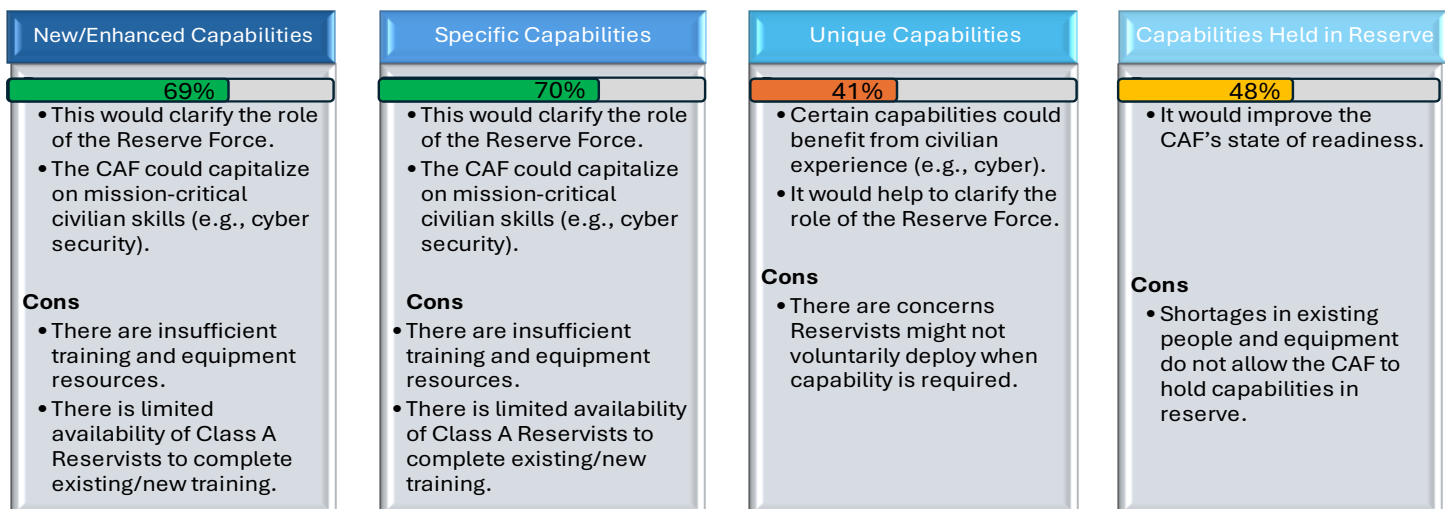
Definition of "Capabilities" from the Department of National Defence Capability Based Planning Handbook:

A capability is a description of the military operational output or outcome that a unit, force or organization is able [and usually constituted or organized] to deliver.



Key Takeaway 2: While there is support for the development of new, enhanced and specific capabilities for Primary Reservists, stakeholders are less supportive of assigning unique capabilities to the Reserve Force and holding capabilities in reserve (i.e., at a lower state of readiness).

In response to a questionnaire, CAF stakeholders reported their level of support for the following three capability scenarios for the Reserve Force and holding capabilities in reserve for the CAF overall:



The strategic integration of Reserve Force capabilities into FP&R planning must be appropriately resourced by the CAF and supported by the military environments. If these challenges are not addressed, the Reserve Force will likely continue to fill individual gaps in the Regular Force. As a result, there is a risk that the Primary Reserve will not be able to deliver capabilities in line with CDS objectives for the CAF or Canada's defence and security objectives.

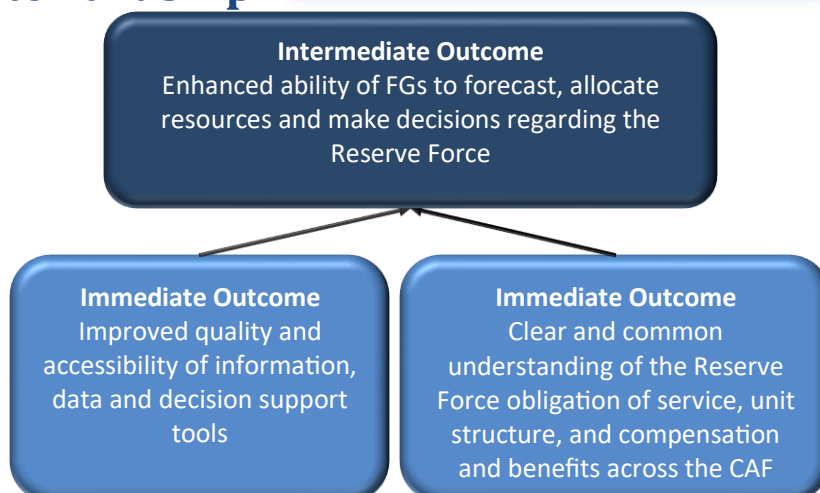
The Chief of Reserves is working with stakeholders across the CAF to:

- clarify the regulatory framework surrounding Reserve service;
- communicate the value of Reserve service to internal and external audiences; and
- align Force Development and FP&R planning with the New Vision.

Stewardship

Theory of Change

The New Vision calls for the review and alignment of Reserve-centric policies, procedures and information to create a clear and common understanding of the Reserve Force so it can be effectively managed. When implemented, FGs and Force Employers will have improved access to information, data and decision support tools to effectively forecast CAF needs and allocate Reserve Force resources.



Key Takeaway 3: A complex Reserve policy environment and insufficient Reserve data could limit the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to effectively plan and allocate Reserve Force resources.

The Reserve Force policy environment is complex and difficult to navigate/manage. The amendment to regulations and the development of new policies that are inconsistent with existing policies across the CAF policy suite have added to the complexity.

Chief of Military Personnel alone is responsible for over
500
policies across the CAF.
Most impact both the Regular and Reserve Force.

Reserve Force policy inconsistencies led to inequities requiring ongoing policy work.

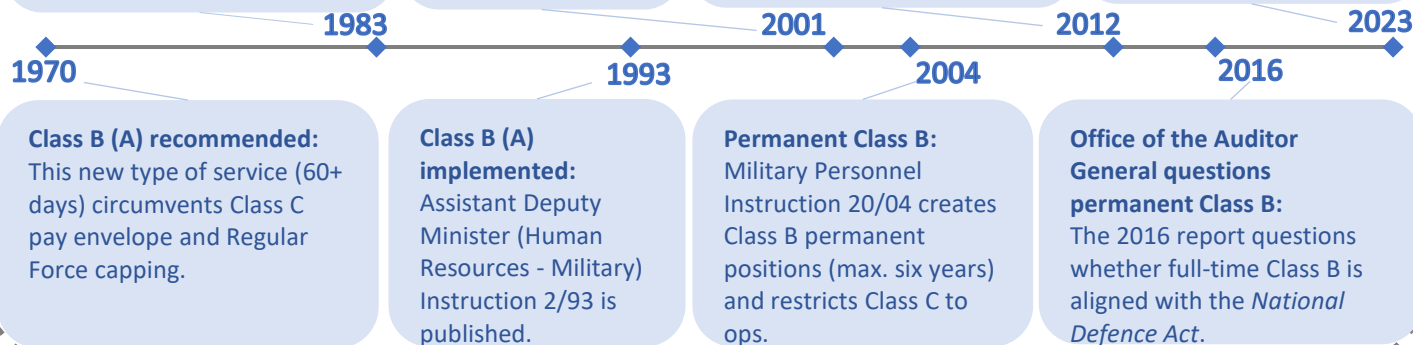
The Queen's Regulations and Orders (QR&O) 9: Reserve Force defines Class B service as temporary full-time service for Reservists and Class C as serving permanent full time on operations or duties of an operational nature in a Regular Force position or a position supernumerary² to the Regular Force. Subsequent policies have created a new permanent Class B and have limited Class C to operational roles only, both of which deviate from the original definitions of Class B and C in QR&O 9.

Class C is now supernumerary to the Regular Force:
QR&O 9 is amended to allow Class C to be supernumerary to the Regular Force.

Class C for ops only:
CANFORGEN CFG 095/01 ceases all non-operational Class C and uses Class B instead.

Cap permanent Class B to 4,500:
The Primary Reserve Employment Capacity Study establishes 4,500 permanent Class B positions.

Call for a holistic review of Reserve Force classes of service:
The New Vision proposes a return to the definitions contained in QR&O 9.

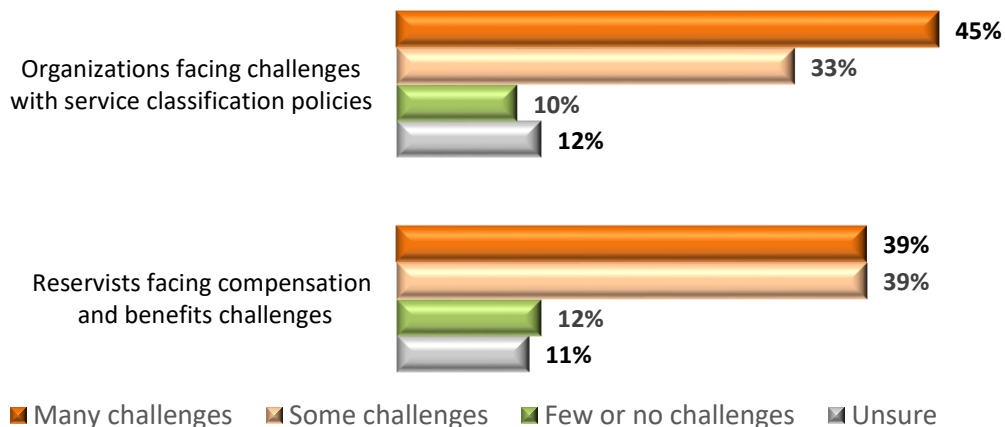


² A position that is supernumerary to the Regular Force is one that is equivalent or standing in for that Regular Force position.

These changes created inequities in pay and benefits within the Reserve Force classes and between the Reserve and Regular Forces, which required additional policy updates. Such policy updates continue today, requiring extensive Department of National Defence resource commitments.

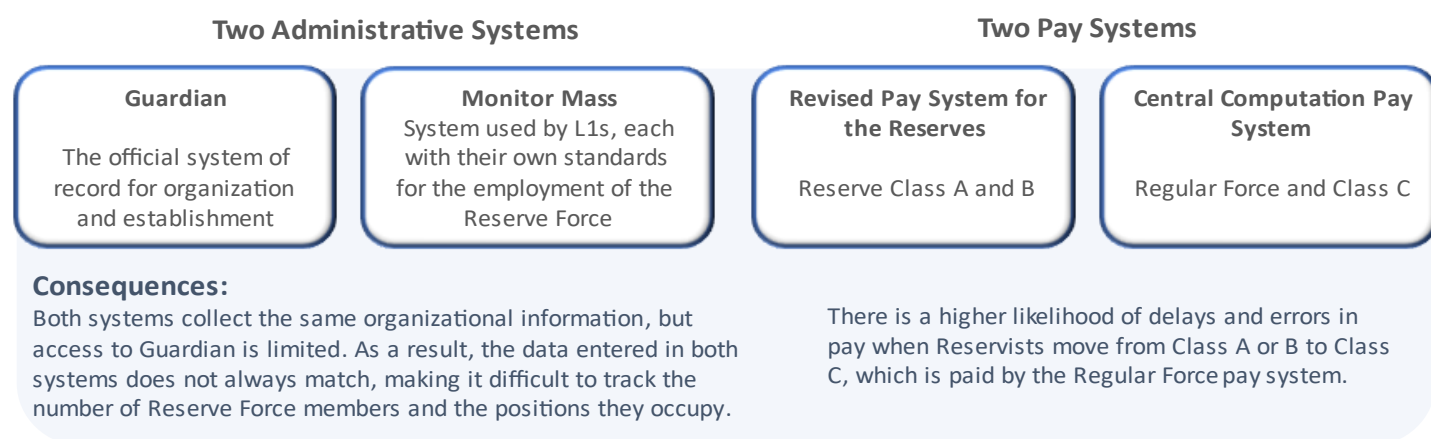
The lack of coherence of the policy environment has widespread repercussions on the organization and members.

Most CAF questionnaire respondents reported their organization experienced challenges with the application of Reserve-related policies, and their Reservists experienced challenges regarding their compensation and benefits.



The New Vision's direction to clarify the Reserve Force obligations of service and related compensations and benefits must first start with an overarching strategy to develop a coherent policy framework for the Reserve Force. Without coherence, there is a risk that Reserve Force policies will be inconsistently applied across the CAF, including those related to compensation and benefits.

The siloed digital environment compounds policy and procedural delays and inconsistencies for the Primary Reserve. Systems for the Reserve Force are often separate and operate differently from systems for the Regular Force. These parallel systems cause delays and inconsistencies, especially in relation to compensation, benefits and component transfers for the Primary Reserve.



Improvements to the digital environment are taking place across the CAF. In the context of the Reserve Force, innovations are continuing to occur in silos, with different groups within the Reserve Force attempting to overcome data challenges on their own. This approach risks a continuation of the siloed approach to data that is already causing challenges for the Reserve Force and the CAF overall.

Several apps are being developed in silos by environments.

MyRCN App

Developed by the Navy for the Naval Reserve to report leave submissions, fleet schedules and availability reports.

2 Canadian Division (2 Cdn Div) Army Reserve App

Developed by the 2 Cdn Div Army (Quebec region) for both Regular and Reserve Force units to report and access information, including readiness and tasking opportunities.

2 Cdn Div Army Readiness Reporting

Being developed by the 2 Cdn Div Army (Quebec region) to report readiness levels of both Regular and Reserve Force units.

No indication if the readiness data is the same or from the same source.

The New Vision's objective to improve the quality and accessibility of information, data and decision support tools will allow the CAF to have access to accurate and updated Reserve Force data and information that will inform readiness planning; however, such improvements will require collaboration across all parts of the CAF.

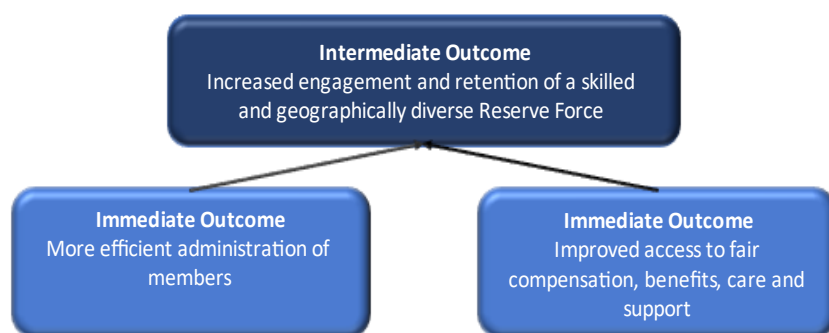
The Chief of Reserves is working with stakeholders across the CAF to:

- address outstanding challenges related to the Reserve Force personnel policy and programs, as well as oversee changes related to digitalization;
- assist and advise internal organizations on delivering on the four New Vision objectives by imbedding C Reserve Staff during staff planning; and
- examine the future of the Employer Support Program.

Recruitment and Retention

Theory of Change

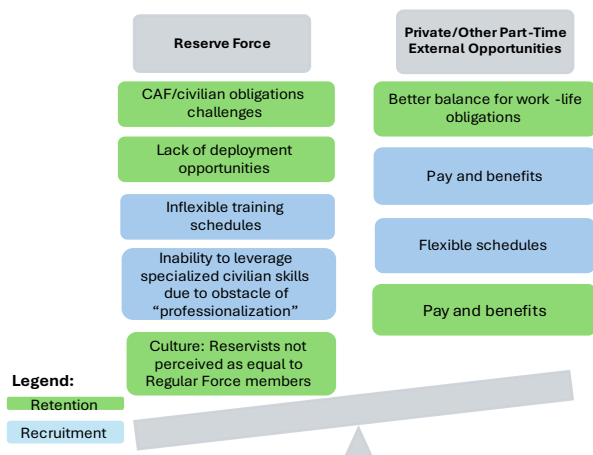
To contribute to Canada's defence and security objectives and to increase the CAF's readiness to respond quickly in times of crisis, the CAF needs a skilled and geographically diverse Reserve Force. To reach this objective, the New Vision calls for an efficient enrollment system, better career management and transition services, and harmonized administrative and pay systems for the Reserve Force.



Key Takeaway 4: The New Vision seeks to address the recruitment and retention challenges unique to the Reserve Force that are not incorporated into larger Canadian Armed Forces initiatives.

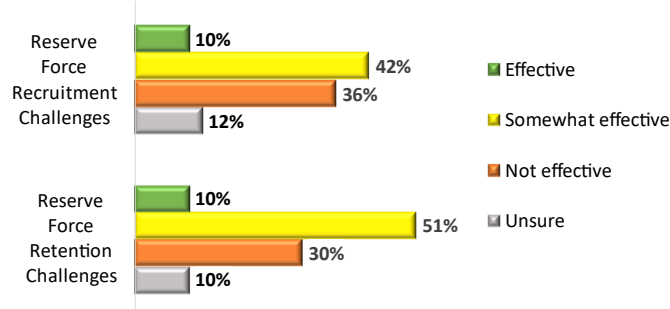
While the Primary Reserve faces the same recruitment and retention challenges as the Regular Force (e.g., long wait times for medical and security assessments), these are compounded by additional challenges unique to the Reserve context. A key challenge for the Reserve Force is that it is in competition with the part-time employment sector, which can offer employment options that the Reserve Force cannot.

Challenges Unique to Reserve Force Recruitment and Retention



The New Vision seeks to reduce barriers to continuing service and to improve support for Reservists. It calls for more efficient and effective administration systems, better career management for Primary Reservists, predictability of training and service, along with compensation and benefits equity with the Regular Force where work is similar. These retention efforts will also improve if supports can be enhanced during key life changes for Reservists. Undertaking the work to better understand the existing challenges of recruitment time into the Reserve Force is also part of the overall CAF recruiting improvement practices.

Surveyed command team members report lack of CAF effectiveness in addressing Reserve Force challenges.



According to stakeholders, these challenges are compounded during three key life changes for Reservists: transitioning from full-time studies to employment, changes in family dynamics (e.g., marriage or civil union, changes in family size) and/or changes in a member's civilian employment status (e.g., new employment, promotion or retirement).

The Primary Reserve grew in FY 2023/24, showing signs of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Intake - Attrition)



The Chief of Reserves is working with stakeholders across the CAF to:

- work with the new Recruiting Capability Board to ensure Reserve Force considerations are integrated in attraction and recruitment initiatives;
- improve the means by which the Chief of Reserves partners with internal organizations on delivering on the New Vision objectives (e.g., joint Chief of Reserves/Chief of Military Personnel tiger team);
- implement the changes outlined in the Employer Support Program to improve relevance to the individual Reservists;
- ensure a consistent approach to the Reserve Force employment model, better aligning it with the QR&Os and providing for flexible career options (e.g., component transfer);
- develop enhanced supports for Reservists during key career and life inflection points to encourage retention; and
- change the method of counting Reservists from APS to Trained Effective Strength.

International Comparison

Canada's New Vision aligns with current efforts in the U.K. and Australia to define the role of the Reserve Force.

Both the U.K. and Australia are carrying out efforts to redefine their Reserve Forces. The U.K.'s Reserve Force Review 2030 seeks to expand the role of Reservists beyond filling vacancies in the Regular Force. Australia's Total Workforce System looks to offer a greater variety of terms of service options for its Reserve Force that allows the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to capitalize on both the military and civilian skills of its Reservists. These initiatives align with the objectives of the New Vision and are the subject of ongoing study by the Chief of Reserves.



Australian Total Workforce System

The ADF has 10 service categories and service options that enable members to move between Regular and Reserve positions throughout their careers. This allows the ADF to retain a larger number of employees with a full spectrum of skills and experience.

Conclusion

The New Vision proposes a strategy for a modernized Reserve Force that is operationally relevant and ready to support the CAF in achieving Canada's defence and security objectives. The evaluation found that the New Vision addressed many obstacles to achieving this goal, but a lack of a common and unified agreement on the tasks and purposes of the Reserve Force is evident. Such an agreement would provide direction on the integration of Reserve Force capabilities into FP&R planning, policy coherence and improvements to the data environment, as well as targets for recruitment and retention of Primary Reservists. Promoting fundamental and meaningful change at all levels, the Department of National Defence/CAF will require a long and sustained effort supported by careful monitoring, reporting and evaluation.