



Scenario: Age-Based Bias in CAF Leadership Selection

Group Size: 4-15

This scenario contains explicit language related to ageism and references to harmful situations which may be emotionally activating for some people. If you need support, services are available through the [CAF Member Assistance Program \(CFMAP\)](#) and the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#).

Captain (Capt) Lebreton is a 45-year-old Army officer who has been in the service for 25 years. They have a stellar record of performance and leadership and is on the verge of being promoted to the rank of major. Capt Lebreton has been vying to be sent into a company commander position next summer. However, when they meet with his battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel (LCol) Whalen, they are shocked to hear that they are being passed over for the position.

LCol Whalen tells them that they are too old to command a company, and that they should consider what type of staff job they would like to go into in Ottawa. The LCol says that the company needs a younger, more energetic leader who can relate to the soldiers and keep up with the pace of operations. Whalen also implies that Capt Lebreton is getting too old to keep up with the troops and that, at their age, they could never be promoted beyond LCol anyhow, so it would be a waste of a company command position for the regiment.

Capt Lebreton knows that they would make an excellent company commander and that they have the proven track-record and high evaluations in leadership competencies that are required. As for not having the energy to keep up with the troops, Capt Lebreton thinks about the high scores they received in the yearly FORCE test and knows that they are in excellent physical condition. They feel confident that they have the energy and motivation to excel while commanding a company and they do not feel that it is right to be excluded from the opportunity based solely on their age. They are not sure what to do about this situation.

Categories

Principles:	Respect the Dignity of All Persons
Values:	Integrity, Loyalty, Courage, Stewardship
Cultural Themes:	Leadership, Teamwork
Misconduct Types:	Discrimination
GBA Plus Themes:	Rank
Audience:	Canadian Armed Forces

Facilitator's Guide

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the ethical principles of Respect the dignity of all persons in this scenario.
- Discuss the ethical values of integrity, loyalty, courage, and stewardship in this scenario.

Facilitation Questions:

1. What is the ethical dilemma in this scenario?
 - Open group discussion.
 - The ethical dilemma in this scenario is whether Capt Lebreton should accept the LCol's decision to deny them a company command position based on what they perceive as age-discrimination or challenge it as discrimination violates the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) values and principles. This thinking also violates also the Canadian Human Rights Acts.
2. What considerations are at play with respect to the Department of National Defence (DND) and CAF Code of Values and Ethics?
 - Open group discussion.
 - Respect the dignity of all persons: Capt Lebreton deserves to be treated respectfully and not discriminated against based on their age.
 - Courage: It will take courage for Capt Lebreton to act on what they perceive as age-discrimination.
 - How the values of Integrity, Loyalty and Stewardship can be at play in this scenario?
3. What possible courses of action could Capt Lebreton take in this scenario? Which is the best option? Why?
 - Option 1: Act. Capt Lebreton could discuss their complaint with a local [Conflict and Complaint Management Services \(CCMS\)](#) office and/or place an [official grievance](#) as LCol Whalen's conduct is discrimination based on age (one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination outlined in the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA)). The National Defence Act gives CAF members the right to make a formal complaint about any decision, act or omission which affects them personally and results from service in the CAF.
 - Option 2: Forget about what has happened, accept that the position is not available to them based on their age, and focus on potential staff officer positions in Ottawa that they would find fulfilling.
 - Option 3: Seek advice. Capt Lebreton could speak to a trusted colleague, mentor, or an ethics advisor to better understand their options in this situation.
4. Do you think that age-discrimination, and/or other forms of discrimination, are real culture issues in the CAF? How could CAF members work to prevent and/or address these forms of workplace discrimination?
 - Open group discussion.
 - Reporting the LCol's conduct could act as a deterrent to future acts of discrimination, both by the LCol themselves, and others in the Defence Team who become aware of the reporting.

*Note to facilitators: For more information on the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA), please review [DAOD 5516-0, Human Rights - Canada.ca](#).