



INITIAL OBSERVATIONS - IMPACT OF CHANGES TO CAF RECRUITING POLICIES AT BASIC TRAINING OVER 2025

Executive Summary

In December 2024 the CAF Probationary Period was established, consolidating several changes in the recruiting system. The Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School (CFLRS) has completed all candidate intakes for calendar year 2025 and has identified relevant changes in candidate outcomes as a result of these cumulative changes. Most critically, the overall success rate for all basic training candidates has reduced from a range of 83%-87% down to 77% for FY 25/26, and the number of candidates requiring multiple attempts to graduate has risen from a range of 5%-7% to 14.89% of all candidates. To ensure that CAF Reconstitution objectives are met, a deliberate decision should be made to balance changes in the recruiting process and changes to the CAF training system to ensure that desired outcomes are achieved.

Introduction

CFLRS is a unique operational unit responsible to deliver basic training for all new Regular Force members of the CAF. CFLRS has two key roles; first to deliver the common Universality of Service (UoS) training required by all CAF members, but also to complete the screening process for all new CAF members which is initiated by the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group (CFRG).

With the formal establishment of the Probationary Period in December 2024, the CAF has codified the process whereby CFRG screens applicants for eligibility and initial suitability, while CFLRS and follow-on Training Establishments (TE) confirm if the member can meet both the performance and conduct requirements of service in a particular CAF occupation.

It is important to note that there is no reasonable expectation that CFRG will ever achieve a 100% success rate in identifying candidates who are well suited to CAF service. Historically approximately 85% of new enrollees successfully completed basic military training over one to three attempts, which has been a sufficiently successful outcome to meet CAF personnel generation requirements if Strategic Intake Plan (SIP) targets are met.

Along with the introduction of the Probationary Period, the CAF has also adjusted the recruiting process and enrollment eligibility criteria, without adjusting its training and support systems. Specifically, adjustments have been made to the Common Enrollment Medical Standard (CEMS) through the Modernized CEMS project (mCEMS), allowing candidates to enroll with a set list of approved Medical Employment Limitations (MELs); the enrollment of permanent residents (and

recently naturalized Canadian citizens) has been streamlined through the removal of the pre-enrollment security review; and, the Canadian Forces Aptitude Test (CFAT) has been removed.

As a result of these changes, CFLRS is experiencing significant changes in candidates' basic capabilities and increasing pressures on staff and instructors. This report will describe the impacts observed at CFLRS through 2025, including outcomes, statistical analysis, and specific impacts:

- Impact of the mCEMS project.
- Impact of CFAT removal.
- Impact of accelerated enrollment of permanent residents.
- Impact on general trends in candidate suitability & Person-Job fit.
- Impact of recruiting changes on CFLRS instructors and staff.

A review is warranted to determine what adjustments could be made either to the recruiting process and criteria, or to CAF training programs, to ensure that the desired CAF outcomes continue to be achieved.

CFLRS Outcomes – Statistical Analysis

Although the Probationary Period only came into effect on 31 December 2024, the CFAT was officially removed in October 2024 with an initial CFAT bypass trial initiated in October 2023. Detailed statistics of graduation rate and release causes are readily available dating back to 1 April 2017 for comparison of basic training outcomes.

Table 1 - Combined BMQ & BMOQ Outcomes					
FY	SIP Candidates In	Graduates	Success Rate	Voluntary Release Rate	Directed Release Rate
FY 25/26 (Q1-Q3)	3090 (closed sessions only)	2380	77%	10.36%	Not yet available
FY 24/25	5732	4786	83.50%	15.77%	1.43%
FY 23/24	3980	3320	83.42%	17.76%	1.51%
FY 22/23	3844	3349	87.12%	13.45%	0.75%
FY 21/22	2828	2470	87.34%	12.62%	0.46%
FY 20/21	877	726	82.78%	14.25%	0.68%
FY 19/20	4946	4105	83.00%	16.82%	0.97%
FY 18/19	4966	4283	86.25%	13.59%	0.97%
FY 17/18	3436	2861	83.27%	15.95%	1.37%

The CAF training system is learner-centered and performance-based, putting emphasis on progression through application of the knowledge and skills needed in various situations representative of the job. The Progress Review Board (PRB) process is designed to monitor the quality of performance in CAF members and enable them to progress through their difficulties. Specific performance deficiencies are identified throughout the Training Plan (TP) to trigger a formal progress review of a candidate's ability to continue training.

Therefore, PRBs do not automatically result in a cease training decision as whenever possible candidates are granted additional learner support and re-test opportunities. Cease-training decisions are made when it is clear that the candidate will not be successful without additional training, and they will be re-coursed to an appropriate point in the training program to ensure they are set up for success on a second attempt. PRBs are also used to formally end training progression through acceptance of a voluntary release or ordering a directed release via a 5(D) or 5(F) decision for candidates who are unable to meet the required standards of performance or conduct.

An analysis of the yearly PRB rate indicates a significant increase in the number of PRBs conducted, both in totality as well as by ratio of total candidates. The increase in PRBs indicates that more candidates are experiencing difficulty in meeting the minimum standards required to pass basic training. A detailed review of cease training reasons highlights specific challenges that are leading to the reduction in success rates.

Table 2 - Progress Review Board Numbers and Ratios			
FY	SIP Candidates In	PRBs	PRB per 100 candidates
FY 25/26 (Q1-Q3)	4257	2377	56
FY 24/25	5732	2936	51
FY 23/24	3980	1925	38
FY 22/23	3844	1478	38
FY 21/22	2828	1041	37
FY 20/21	877	391	45
FY 19/20	4946	2306	46
FY 18/19	4966	2025	41

While the total number of PRBs is driven in part by the increase in recruiting and basic training tempo, the increasing PRB ratio directly reflects that more candidates are struggling to meet the performance or conduct standards required to pass basic training. The number of candidates who received a 're-course' decision at their PRB is another indicator of performance quality for basic training candidates. Candidates who are removed from training but will continue on a new platoon are sent to Training Reintegration Program (TRP) Phase 3, which is exclusively candidates ready to return to training as soon as a course seat is available. Candidates here do include those who suffer a very minor injury or illness that prevented them from continuing with their training.

FY	SIP Candidates In	TRP 3 Intakes	Percentage of candidates Re-coursed (1 or more times)
FY 25/26 (Q1-Q3)	4257	634	14.89%
FY 24/25	5732	484	8.44%
FY 23/24	3980	278	6.98%
FY 22/23	3844	267	6.95%
FY 21/22	2828	123	4.35%
FY 20/21	877	65	7.41%
FY 19/20	4946	260	5.27%
FY 18/19	4966	277	5.58%

Cease Training Reason	Medical	Practical EC/PC	Academic EC/PC	All Other Causes
FY 25/26 (Q1-Q3)	45%	27%	7%	21%
FY 24/25	57%	20.5%	5%	17.5%
FY 23/24	62%	15%	2%	21%

Changes to cease-training recordings in 2023 make it difficult to clearly compare results beyond 4 years, to the sample is limited to current data to ensure valid comparisons are being made.

Medical cease-training is caused when a candidate receives a short-duration medical employment limitation (MEL) that prevents them from carrying on with their platoon schedule, for example three days of bedrest or a week of no marching. More seriously injured candidates are transferred to TRP Phase 1 to recover and are not captured in this table.

Basic training is composed of various Enabling Checks (EC) and Performance Checks (PC) to ensure basic job standards are met. Typical failures by general EC/PC category are:

- **Practical:**
 - Drill
 - Weapons Handling.
 - Fitness – specifically 3km or 5km ruck marches.
- **Academic:**
 - Simple multiple-choice tests (average of 13.75 questions per test).
 - Topics including harassment & sexual misconduct policies, military structure, military ethos, and topography and navigation theory.
- **Behavioural (Captured in all other causes):**
 - Inability to adhere to CAF expected behaviours.
 - Missed mandatory periods.
 - Compassionate issues.
 - Exceptional conduct issues.

Impact of the mCEMS project

Less than 100 candidates who were enrolled under the mCEMS project have arrived at CFLRS. Due to challenges in communicating the specific MELs that affect these candidates, CFLRS staff are generally unaware of which candidates are affected by this project. As every approved MEL was designed to be compatible with the basic training curriculum without modification, this situation has not created any challenges. A single case of an MCEMS candidate presenting a major medical concern was noted, with a candidate suffering a significant schizophrenic episode early during their training; however, based on information provided by their family it appears this was a case of deliberate deception during the enrollment process.

In general, the direct impact of the mCEMS project has been completely unremarkable at CFLRS, however it appears that there may be a significant indirect impact playing out between recruiting centres and basic training. Since the announcement of the mCEMS project, specifically the public announcement that applicants who suffering from anxiety can join the CAF, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of candidates presenting significant mental health concerns at CFLRS, none of whom were enrolled under a formal mCEMS category.

- In FY 24/25, CFLRS processed four 5(E) Irregular Enrollment releases for medical conditions identified during basic training.
- From Q1 to Q3 of FY 25/26, CFLRS has processed 16 5(E) releases, overwhelmingly for mental health concerns. At the same time the overall voluntary release rate has dropped, but a consistent theme of the remaining voluntary release requests has become self-declared mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (both pre-existing and emergent).
- Throughout 2025, 92 candidates were transported to external mental healthcare providers a total of 191 occasions, and the local suicide crisis centre is typically filled to full capacity with CFLRS candidates.

In consultations with recruits, reviewing release request forms, discussing with medical personnel, and consulting with the Recruiting Medical Office (RMO), it appears that a significant number of candidates are deliberately not disclosing their history of mental health issues during the recruitment process. Consideration should be given to reviewing the recruiting medical process, as well as adjusting any future messaging regarding eligibility for service with mental health concerns to better reflect that CAF service requires both physical and mental resiliency. CFLRS is also working with the Canadian Defence Academy to update official cease training codes in Guardian and will be better postured to systematically track voluntary releases attributed to pre-existing mental health concerns throughout 2026 to measure the scale of this concern.

CFLRS makes the following recommendations regarding medical enrollment eligibility:

- Continue mCEMS trial in the current format, restricting candidates with significant mental health concerns from joining the CAF.
- Be clear in recruiting and attraction language that mental resilience is required and avoid statements that suggest that applicants suffering from mental health issues can join the CAF without restrictions.

Impact of CFAT Removal

The removal of aptitude testing in the recruiting process appears to have directly caused an increase in the number of candidates failing academic and practical performance objectives. During the comparison period from FY 223/24 to FY 25/26 the basic training ECs and PCs have not changed.

Over the past 3 years, academic EC/PC failure rate tripled, from 2% to 7%, while practical EC/PC failure rates nearly doubled, as shown in Table 4. This is reinforced by the significant increase in the PRB ratio as shown in Table 2, which has increased 47%, moving from 38 PRBs for every 100 candidates to 56 PRBs.

In general, CFLRS has experienced a notable increase in the number of candidates who are unable to learn in the military environment. This includes candidates from a wide variety of educational backgrounds including both high school and university graduates who may have benefited from increased learning support resources available in civilian education that cannot be provided in a practical military training environment. These candidates have been unable to learn basic practical skills such as drill and weapons, as well as several candidates who have been unable to read without assistance. For many of these candidates, they have self-admitted a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) during their PRB proceedings.

While the CFAT may not have been a perfect tool, it is clear that some form of deliberate aptitude test would be an effective method to pre-screen candidates for minimal learning capacity to be successful in our current CAF training, as evidenced by the declining success rates, increasing PRB ratios, as well as the near-doubling of the re-course rate over three years as shown in Table 3.

CFLRS makes the following recommendations regarding aptitude testing during recruiting:

- The experience of downstream TEs should be examined to confirm if occupational training programs have experienced the same increase in failure rates.
- Re-establish some form of aptitude testing during the recruiting process.

Impact of Accelerated Enrollment of Permanent Residents

	BMQ			BMOQ		
	Total PR Percentage	English Serials	French Serials	Total PR Percentage	English Serials	French Serials
FY 24/25	5.19%	5.51%	3.91%	8.61%	9.38%	5.92%
FY 25/26	14.41%	7.68%	15.65%	12.94%	12.54%	14.08%

	BMQ				BMOQ			
	CAN ENG	PR ENG	CAN FRE	PR FRE	CAN ENG	PR ENG	Can FRE	PR FRE
FY 24/25	24.34	28.81	23.41	31.82	29.81	34.91	31.76	35.80
FY 25/26	25.24	29.65	24.60	33.62	28.12	33.59	33.46	36.52

Since the recruiting process was amended to enroll permanent residents with the same security screening as Canadian citizens, 685 permanent residents have arrived at CFLRS to attend BMQ, and 371 to attend BMOQ. They have been a challenging demographic to train for several reasons, but the experience has varied dramatically between NCM and Officer candidates, as well as English and French courses. As the changes to security clearance procedures for permanent residents have also accelerated the enrollment of recently naturalized Canadian citizens, it should be noted that while not tracked by CFLRS, the number of new Canadians in training is greater than represented by permanent residents alone in Table 5.

The initial platoons that arrived at CFLRS in January 2025 were heavily loaded with permanent residents who had been waiting for the previous pre-security clearance process but could now be enrolled directly in the CAF. This led to a French BMOQ platoon that was made up of 83% permanent residents, while English BMOQ platoons were typically in the 30% range. These initial platoons were also made up of candidates with as little as three months residency in Canada, leading to a significant culture shock as candidates had not yet acclimatized to Canadian society, let alone Canadian military culture.

This proved to be a significantly greater challenge for Francophone permanent resident officers, who were also older than their English counterparts. 47% of French-speaking permanent residents are over 35 years old, while 33% of English-speaking permanent residents are over 35. The graduation rate for the first Francophone permanent resident platoon was 48%, and the platoon was plagued by allegations of racism (from candidates against staff but equally candidates against other candidates) and constant infighting between cultural blocks within the platoon (i.e. Cameroonian candidates against those from Cote D'Ivoire). English permanent resident heavy platoons suffered from low fitness levels but generally demonstrated quick adaptation to the military environment.

Across both groups, a common theme emerged that most permanent resident officer candidates had expected a 'technical college' experience, not a military indoctrination program (permanent residents have failed the initial basic training fitness screening test at a rate of 14.79% compared

to 7.89% for citizens within the same period). This was not observed on BMQ platoons, where permanent resident candidates appeared to have a clear understanding that they were attending a military training program.

In general, the outcomes for permanent resident candidates on BMQ match Canadian citizens but are noticeably different for BMOQ. The average success rate for Canadian citizens is 85%, while the success rate for permanent resident officer candidates is 88%. The difference however is how many attempts at BMOQ are required to ultimately be successful, with older Francophone permanent resident candidates being much more likely to require additional attempts to succeed.

As an immediate adaptation, CFLRS requested to CFRG that the number of permanent residents enrolled on any single platoon be limited to 25%, with the intent for permanent residents to blend into the program rather than become the focus as had happened with the first Francophone BMOQ course. English direct entry BMOQ courses have maintained a 25.3% average of permanent resident candidates, and a high of 47%. French direct entry BMOQ courses however remain heavily loaded with permanent residents, with an average of 57.1%.

Specific observations relating to training permanent residents and new Canadians include:

- Weak oral interaction abilities in either English or French. While most candidates are skilled at reading and writing there are significant issues with oral comprehension. Inadequate language skills are the leading cause of directed releases for these candidates, and initial evidence from downstream TEs has highlighted that the verbal language comprehension issue is compounded for all occupational training programs that require communication over radio in tactical & operational scenarios.
- Lack of realistic expectations. These candidates are much less likely to have a realistic expectation of what basic training as well as occupational training will involve, including the requirement to carry on with additional training after BMQ/BMOQ, and to be posted geographically across Canada. A surprising number of permanent resident candidates believed they would simply go home after basic training or had no family care plan beyond the duration of basic training. Additional education and screening in the interview phase of recruiting may help address this.
- Permanent resident officer candidates in particular are more likely to imagine a CAF officer position as a public service job, rather than a military occupation. This is particularly notable for candidates enrolled as Logistics, Engineer, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, Maritime Systems Engineering, Health Services Management Officer, and increasingly Artillery and Armour Officers, with these two combat trades increasingly made up of applicants who were re-directed from the closed trades they initially applied for.
- These candidates are much older. Basic training success rates have always been lower for candidates above 40 years of age, which equally impacts candidates from all backgrounds. As the current recruiting screening tool, the SEAF, rewards life experience, it inherently increases the competitiveness of older applicants. Notably, 71% of Canadian

citizen BMOQ candidates are under 24, while 71% of Permanent Resident BMOQ candidates are between 30-44. Older candidates are less able to adapt, which is a compounding issue for permanent residents who are adapting to both the broader Canadian culture, and Canadian military culture, at the same time.)

- Specific cultural issues have also been a challenge in training permanent resident platoons, particularly on BMOQ where leadership training is emphasized and permanent resident ratios are higher. For many candidates it is the first time that they have lived with members of a different sex, and for some it is also the first time they have been expected to treat women as their peers. Older candidates from certain cultural backgrounds are also more likely to experience friction when responding to younger CFLRS instructors due to cultural hierarchies based on age. Mid and end-course surveys completed by candidates from BMQ and BMOQ platoons are also reporting inter-candidate cultural frustrations, with lack of respect towards women being the most common concern.

CFLRS has made efforts to adapt instructional approaches to address these observed challenges. All candidates are provided with laptops with electronic copies of courseware so that they can study all practical and academic material in the evenings and over weekends. To address misaligned expectations, a new class has been added on the second day of training to set clear expectations for what will happen during basic training as well as the required values and behaviors that candidates must adhere to. Platoons most heavily loaded with permanent residents have been staffed with diverse instructors that model the mutual respect and teamwork required to succeed in the CAF, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or age.

While there has been progressive improvement in this aspect of cultural adaptation since clear expectations and deliberate role models were implemented, CFLRS does not have the necessary personnel to scale the deliberate selection of staff across the entire school. Only 7.5% of CFLRS instructors are women, and the percentage of racialized instructors is even less.

Finally, the experience of training many permanent residents enrolling in a relatively short period has not been felt universally across CFLRS. Many Anglophone BMQ instructors have reported zero impact, while Anglophone BMOQ instructors and all Francophone instructors have been disproportionately affected however, leading to stronger feelings and opinions.

- On English BMOQ platoons, where the average platoon has been made up of ~25% permanent residents, instructors focus on the challenges encountered by candidates who can't adequately speak the language of their enrollment but rarely identify cultural adaptation challenges.
- Candidates enrolling as English speakers would most benefit from formalized language testing as part of recruiting to ensure they have the minimum baseline of capacity required to succeed at both basic and occupational training.

- On French BMOQ platoons, where permanent residents have made up 50-80% of all candidates, there have been more emotional responses, with Francophone staff openly raising the question of whether it is appropriate for officer commissions to be granted to non-Canadian citizens. French instructors across the school have noticed the extremely high percentage of much older, non-citizen officer candidates and widely proposed that permanent residents should enroll for an initial 3-year term as an NCM to adapt to CAF culture as a follower and then be offered an opportunity to commission. Regardless of this proposal, proactive attention must be paid to the downstream units where these new officers will be posted, as there is a high risk of cultural friction in Francophone units.
- Candidates enrolling as French speakers have been much more likely to be re-coursed but are most often successful after two or three attempts. The key factor is that Francophone permanent residents have inadvertently benefited from the relatively low number of French BMQ and BMOQ courses offered each year as the additional time waiting in TRP 3 has served to continue the cultural inculcation process, leading candidates to be better prepared for a second attempt. The single greatest intervention that would benefit Francophone permanent residents would be to formally limit the maximum ratio of permanent resident candidates on any training course.

The relatively significant difference in experiences of English and French speaking permanent residents appears to be strongly correlated with the ratios of candidates on each course. It appears that English speaking candidates are benefiting from the support and modelling provided by peer candidates who are more deeply inculcated in Canadian culture, and that this can be a decisive factor in supporting new Canadians to successfully adapt to CAF life. This suggests that the simplest adaptation that the CAF could make to improve outcomes, in addition to language testing, would be to enforce controls over the ratios of permanent residents on each training platoon.

CFLRS makes the following recommendations regarding the enrollment of permanent residents:

- CFLRS highly recommends that formal first official language testing be brought into recruiting for all permanent residents and recently naturalized Citizens. As the core issue observed at CFLRS has been the inability to give or respond to instruction and direction in either official language, this test must assess oral interaction ability.
- It is also recommended that the SEAF be re-assessed to adjust the competitiveness of younger candidates with greater potential for success in both the training system as well as over an average length career, rather than the current model which prioritizes older applicants.
- Re-evaluate the use of civilian job listing aggregators to promote CAF careers to assess if the military factor of certain popular jobs is clearly communicated.

- It is recommended that maximum permanent resident percentages be formalized for all courses, at or below 20-25%, to allow for more successful adaptation to the CAF culture and lifestyle.
- It is recommended to evaluate the impacts of alternate models for permanent resident integration, to include initially enrolling all permanent residents as NCMs to acclimatize to CAF culture before assuming leadership positions; developing permanent resident specific BMOQ courses with an adapted and extended training plan; or to develop a pre-course for permanent residents to extend the time provided for adaptation.

Impacts of Candidate Suitability / Person-Job fit

An emerging friction at CFLRS is not solely the result of any changes to recruiting eligibility but also appears to be a result of increased pressure on recruiting staff as well as the move to virtual interfaces for many stages of the recruiting process. Candidates at CFLRS are increasingly likely to have poor 'person-job' fit characteristics for their enrolled occupation, or potentially any military occupation.

CFLRS instructors frequently encounter candidates that they believe could have been more appropriately guided by Military Career Counselors; either to provide more honest feedback about their suitability for a CAF career, or to suggest military occupations that may be a better fit than those they have applied for. Most recently, an ordained Anglican Minister was enrolled as an Artillery Officer, leading to questions about what career counselling was provided to the member, who was ultimately unsuccessful at BMOQ due to their discomfort with handling the service rifle.

Although these outliers are a relative minority of the candidates who arrive at CFLRS, these cases disproportionately occupy the mentality of instructors, leading to deep frustration. CFRG engagement has been key on several occasions to investigate the specific circumstances behind a candidate's enrollment, which increases confidence in the recruiting system and helps clarify candidate allegations of misinformation from their CFRC. The release authorities delegated to CFLRS as well as all other TEs are also sufficient to manage cases where candidates have no reasonable pathway to success, and communication efforts are ongoing to ensure both permanent and CFTPO staff bring challenging cases to the attention of the chain of command to be resolved quickly. Downstream TEs should also be engaged to ensure that they are equally confident in applying their 5(D) and 5(F) release authorities in a framework of procedural fairness.

From the perspective of CFLRS leadership, it is clear that many candidates have an overly optimistic assessment of their own physical fitness, or equally a deliberate bias towards only acknowledging the elements of information given to them during the recruiting process that support an idealized and unrealistic career path they have imagined. The efforts of CFRG personnel should be reinforced with the proactive provision of as much information as possible about military lifestyle, specific military occupations, physical fitness requirements, and the reality of basic and occupational training, both on Forces.ca as well as through social media platforms like Youtube.

CFLRS makes the following general recommendations regarding recruiting:

- CFRG interview formats (both standard and abbreviated) should be reviewed to ensure that candidates are required to demonstrate a clear understanding of both the military lifestyle and the occupations for which they have applied. All candidates should demonstrate a basic understanding of their potential trade of enrollment, including a general sense of the training regime, posting locations, and potential timeline until they will receive a full posting to include reuniting with dependents.
- Occupational authorities must also be engaged to ensure that the trade information on Forces.ca is fully up to date, including detailed descriptions of the timelines for occupational training and initial posting locations. It must be clearly communicated to service and occupational authorities that this is a branch and trade function, and not a CFRG responsibility to continually review and update the quality and accuracy of this information, as it may be the only information a future recruit uses to make the decision to join the trade.
- In coordination with occupational authorities, CFRG should consider a standardized ranking of working conditions for all trades. For example, a simple Level 1, 2, 3 style system could be created to rank the relative physicality of each CAF occupation, roughly analogous to the ranking of spice level for packaged food. Many candidates with limited knowledge of the military mismatch their personal ambition with their trade of enrollment, discovering during their basic training that they do not want a highly physical trade, or equally realizing the opposite. The Naval Experience Program is a good model here, and CFLRS understands that the Canadian Army is making initial inquiries into a comparable option that would help candidates choose their trade after first being exposed to the land environment.
- Returning fitness training to recruiting in some form would also be a significant benefit to basic training. At the current scale of SIP 7000, the arrival fitness testing model is functioning, but it requires the maintenance of space for up to 200 candidates in the fitness testing, development, or injury recovery program, equivalent to over three basic training platoons worth of accommodations and staff. Establishing a minimum pre-arrival fitness level would increase the credibility of CAF recruiting across many audiences, although it is acknowledged that it would require significant work by CFRG to implement.

Impact of Recruiting Changes on CFLRS Instructors and Staff

Changes to CAF recruiting eligibility requirements and process were implemented at the same time as an extensive recruiting and basic training surge, leading to the busiest year in the history of CFLRS. Exacerbating this, the quick pace of change did not allow instructor cadre training and course content to be deliberately adapted in advance of changes, and CFLRS is now reacting to observations on a course-by-course basis.

This makes it challenging to fully separate the impacts of recruiting changes from those of the increased operational tempo. While the TP sets of a requirement of 10 staff, most BMQ and BMOQ platoons are operating with six to eight staff members, including at least one MCpl/MS position per platoon which has been downranked to a Pte/Cpl. Furthermore, up to 20% these staff are short-term augmentees sourced via CFTPO, who have limited experience in training roles and may only teach a single course at CFLRS.

In addition, most courses have at least a two-week break scheduled between serials, but the shortfalls of staff means that most staff are spending this 'break' backfilling the field training portion of another BMQ or BMOQ course, where full staffing is required to deliver the assessed field exercise phase. This has led to a situation where the impact of changes are being felt by personnel who are already operating at an elevated tempo, and who are potentially less able to positively respond to changes, even when they fully understand the operational imperative behind them – to reconstitute the CAF.

The key friction reported by CFLRS instructors is that they genuinely want to see their candidates succeed, but they feel constrained by the rapid pace of the current BMQ and BMOQ TP, and the lack of free space available to mentor and re-train candidates who are struggling. The source of this friction is that the TP and timetable were designed for a candidate population of CFAT screened Canadian citizens and has not been readily adaptable for a changing candidate population. Experienced basic training instructors also do not expect CFRG to recruit 'perfect' candidates, but rather that most candidates will succeed with the standard level of training, mentoring, and coaching prescribed in the basic training TP, with a smaller number requiring additional support to eventually succeed.

Before the implementation of recruiting changes, 83% to 87% of basic training candidates would ultimately graduate, with 5% to 7% of candidates requiring multiple attempts to successfully pass. The graduation rate in FY 2025/26 has now dropped to 77%, with 14.89% of candidates requiring multiple attempts. CFLRS has been required to quickly adapt structures and staff prioritization to adapt to these changes but has yet to systematically reframe the required attitude and approach from instructors, other than to maintain that the existing standards of basic training, including performance and conduct, will be maintained. In short, CFLRS instructors were told to expect 15% of their candidates to fail to graduate, but they are now experiencing rates on individual platoons ranging from 20-40%, falling well short of the model they were trained to expect.

When asked for recommendations, CFLRS staff are unanimous that aptitude testing would increase the quality and training outcomes for basic training candidates, followed by first official language testing for permanent residents and naturalized Canadian citizens. Lack of learning capacity and lack of language capacity are the two most obvious root causes of candidate failures being experienced by CFLRS, and thus the most critical to address.

Opinion diverges when proposing adjustments for training permanent residents. Staff who have only trained platoons where the ratio is below 20% generally have no observation to make other than the requirement for language testing. Staff who have trained platoons at 40 to 80% permanent resident candidates have more significant recommendations, including offering

specific courses for permanent resident candidates that are longer and include more Canadian cultural education and training, and more commonly to create a separate entry pathway for permanent resident officers to initially join for three years as an NCM until they are granted their citizenship. As previously mentioned, Francophone NCOs have had the most challenging issues in adapting to training permanent resident officers, citing the relative age differential and most platoons being composed of more than 50% permanent resident candidates.

Conclusion

The current CAF basic training model assumes that roughly 85% of all candidates can be effectively trained to become CAF soldiers, sailors, aviators, and officers, with the majority requiring only a single training course, and a minority taking two to three attempts. The cumulative effect of changes to recruiting without adapting the training and support system has reduced the current success rate to 77% and created significant frictions within CFLRS, such as the dramatic expansion in the number and ratio of PRBs that must be conducted by mid-level leaders, and the number of candidates now waiting to be re-coursed after being unsuccessful on a first or second attempt.

It is also important to note that CFLRS only offers one window into the process that turns civilian applicants into qualified CAF members. Basic training experiences need to be compared to the outcomes of occupational training at downstream TEs to validate the most effective interventions that could be made to optimize the required CAF growth over the next 10 years - finding the key balance between quality and quantity of applicants along with determining the key balance in recruitment changes versus training and support systems changes.

While CFLRS has proposed recommendations that would increase the quality of applicants, the military imperative remains to reconstitute and grow the CAF. It is not the preferred course of action for the CAF TE community, but CFLRS is equally capable of adapting staff training, mentoring, and cultural inculcation to support an alternate recruiting paradigm where more attrition is expected. Regardless of the decisions taken, the deliberate assignment of a target BMQ/BMOQ success rate would help refine the options available to adjust CAF recruiting and selection.

Summary of Recommendations

- Continue mCEMS trial but maintain strong control over enrollment of candidates with pre-existing mental health concerns.
- Minimize language in recruiting and selection communications stating that those suffering from mental health issues can freely join the CAF.
- Re-establish some form of aptitude testing during the recruiting process to prevent common academic concerns across all OFP TEs.
- Conduct formal first official language testing, including verbal skills, for all permanent residents and naturalized Canadian citizens.

- Adjust the SEAF to make younger applicants more competitive.
- Establish a maximum percentage of permanent residents loaded on basic training courses, at or below 20-25% to improve outcomes for these candidates.
- Adjust the CFRG abbreviated interview format to require all applicants to demonstrate a basic understanding of their potential trade of enrollment and key elements of the military lifestyle.
- Consider implementing a standardize trade 'ranking' system to highlight the relative physicality of CAF trades, or other relevant factors, to help applicant self-select appropriate trades – or – add generic entry pathways for Army personnel.
- Engage Occupational Authorities to create high quality, accurate, and up-to-date content for the Forces.ca trade descriptions.
- Consider options to re-establish fitness testing as part of the recruitment process.

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Date: 27 January 2026

