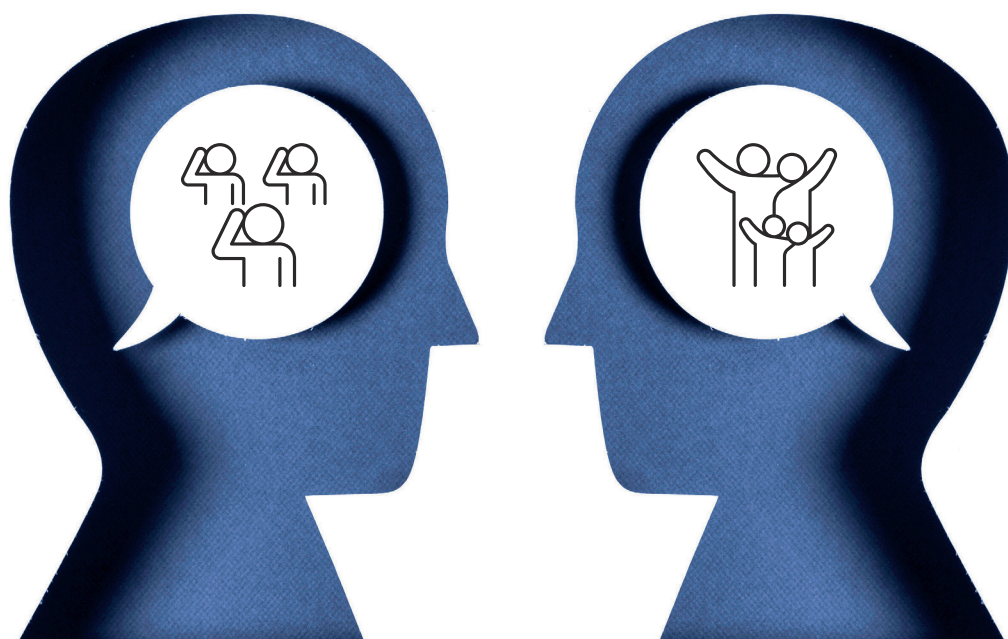


Service versus Self

**A systemic investigation
into contingency cost moves for personal reasons,
compassionate status, and compassionate postings in the
Canadian Armed Forces**

Report to the Minister of National Defence

May 2022



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Mandate

The Office of the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman was created in 1998 by Order-in-Council to increase transparency in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as to ensure the fair treatment of concerns raised by Canadian Armed Forces members, Departmental employees, and their families.

The Office is a direct source of information, referral, and education for the members of the Defence community. Its role is to help individuals access existing channels of assistance or redress when they have a complaint or concern. The office is also responsible for reviewing and investigating complaints from constituents who believe they have been treated unfairly by the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Armed Forces. In addition, the Ombudsman may investigate and report publicly on matters affecting the welfare of Canadian Armed Forces members, Department of National Defence employees, and others falling within their jurisdiction.

The ultimate goal is to contribute to substantial and long-lasting improvements to the Defence community. Any of the following people may bring a complaint to the Ombudsman when the matter is directly related to the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Armed Forces:

- A current or former member of the Canadian Armed Forces
- A current or former member of the Cadets
- A current or former employee of the Department of National Defence
- A current or former Non-Public Fund employee
- A person applying to become a member
- A member of the immediate family of any of the above-mentioned
- An individual on an exchange or secondment with the Canadian Armed Forces

The Ombudsman is independent of the military chain of command and senior civilian management and reports directly to the Minister of National Defence.

Abbreviation guide

ARC – Chief of Military Personnel Administrative Response Centre
 APS – Active Posting Season
 CAF – Canadian Armed Forces
 CAF TG – Canadian Armed Forces Transition Group
 CAF TU – Canadian Armed Forces Transition Unit
 CDS – Chief of the Defence Staff
 CMP – Chief of Military Personnel
 CT – Component Transfer
 DAOD – Defence Administrative Orders and Directives
 DGMC – Director General Military Careers
 DGMPPRA – Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis
 D Mil C – Director Military Careers
 DMCPG – Director Military Careers Policy and Grievances
 DMFS – Director Military Family Services
 DND – Department of National Defence
 DSA – Director Senior Appointments
 GBA Plus – Gender Based Analysis Plus
 ICCM – Integrated Conflict and Complaint Management
 IR – Imposed Restriction
 LWOP – Leave Without Pay
 MFRC – Military Family Resource Centre
 MFS – Military Family Services
 MOSID – Military Occupational Structure Identification Code
 MPRR – Military Personnel Record Resume
 PSHCP – Public Service Health Care Plan
QR&Os – Queen’s Regulations and Orders
 SOP – Standard Operating Procedures
SSE – Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy
 VOT – Voluntary Occupational Transfer

Executive summary

The Office of the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence (DND) and Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has been interested in issues relating to the administration of [compassionate postings, compassionate status and contingency cost moves for personal reasons](#) since 2013, with the [On the Homefront](#) report taking a first look at issues affecting military families. Compassionate postings continue to be an area where the CAF could improve support for Regular Force members and their families and have a positive impact on recruitment and retention. As such, this investigation was launched in January 2021.

From 1 September 2017 to 31 March 2021, this office received 84 complaints related to contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings. During this same period, the approving authority¹ 38 percent of received contingency cost move requests (93 of 245) and 58 percent of received compassionate posting/status requests (238 of 411).²

Throughout this investigation, we found that the current policy and administration of compassionate postings, compassionate status and contingency cost moves do not consider sufficiently the modern-day realities of CAF members and their families. This could impact career advancement, the well-being and mental health of CAF members and their families, and create long-term retention issues. For some CAF members, [a contingency cost move, compassionate status or compassionate posting](#) is the only way to assist their elderly parents, ensure their children receive specialized care, or finalize parental agreements in the case of separation while remaining in the CAF. Further, a standardized definition, or guidelines on what constitutes ‘family’, does not exist within the compassionate posting policy. This may discourage members from applying since a member could wrongly believe “family”, in the context of the policy, means only the people listed as dependants on their Military Personnel Record Resume (MPRR).

This report makes three recommendations to the Minister of National Defence, seven findings and one observation grouped under three themes:

- policy and process;
- communication; and
- mental health and support services.

If implemented, these recommendations will improve the compassionate posting process for members and their families and lead to a long-lasting, positive impact for the Defence community.

¹ The approving authority depends on the rank of the member requesting the compassionate posting. The approving authority for: general and flag officers, is DGMC; for colonel/captain(N), is DSA; and for private/sailor third class to lieutenant-colonel/commander inclusive, is D Mil C.

² Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman. Complaint Files.

Summary of impact on National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces constituents

Contingency cost moves, compassionate status and compassionate postings enable Regular Force members to be posted to a location, or stay in a location, that temporarily alleviates or responds to their personal circumstances. While the CAF is not unique in its requirement to move personnel, the impact of frequent relocation (on average every three to four years) can be challenging for the families of Regular Force CAF members, especially those with a non-traditional make-up or who are supporting family members with disabilities. Military families face challenges related to aging parents, parental arrangements, access to medical care, and family support, among others. The ability to request a compassionate posting is essential to the well-being, and especially the mental health, of CAF members.

This investigation identified three main areas of concern regarding contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings:

- policy and process;
- communication; and
- mental health and support services.

Resolving the systemic issues noted in this report will lead to substantial and long-lasting improvement for CAF members and their families. The recommendations made in this report, if accepted and implemented, aim to ensure that CAF members and their families:

- benefit from the improved transparency of the administration of compassionate postings;
- are treated fairly and consistently by the DND/CAF; and
- have an improved overall experience navigating the compassionate posting process.

The implementation of these recommendations would also contribute to the CAF's efforts to be a more inclusive employer and promote retention of CAF members. When there are specific individual issues, CAF members (current and former) and their families can contact our office for assistance. Our office is one of the only recourse mechanisms available to family members.

Section I: Context

Definition of family

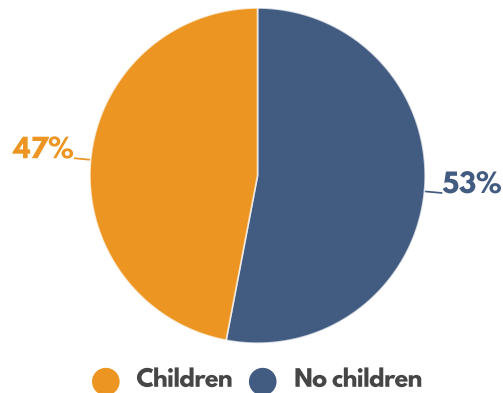
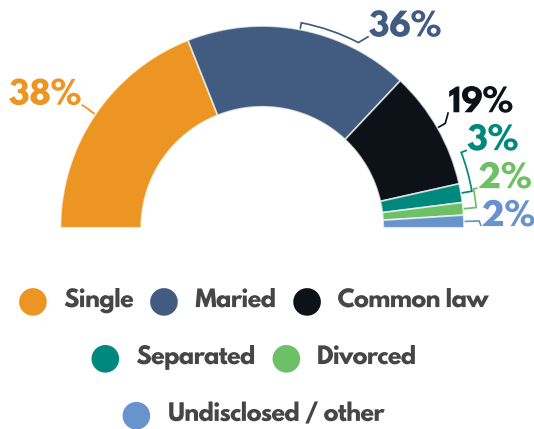
Canada's defence policy, Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE), recognizes the vital role of the family in a CAF member's service: "military families are the strength behind the uniform."³ Defence Administrative Orders and Directives ([DAOD](#) 5003-6, *Contingency Cost Moves for Personal Reasons, Compassionate Status and Compassionate Posting* ⁴ does not have a standardized definition of family for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings. DAOD 5003-6 should recognize the wider context of the changing demographic make-up of Canadian society and consider modern-day relationships, such as common-law, unmarried relationships, divorce, same-sex marriages, non-cohabiting spouses or couples, and caregiver relationships.

³ National Defence. Strong, Secure, Engaged. 2017. <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/index.asp> [accessed November 2021].

⁴ Department of National Defence. DAOD 5003-6, Contingency Cost Moves for Personal Reasons, Compassionate Status and Compassionate Posting. 2001. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5003/5003-6-contingency-cost-moves-for-personal-reasons-compassionate-status-and-compassionate-posting.html> [accessed November 2021].

Demographics⁵

**Graph 1:
Regular Force demographics**



⁵ Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services. *State of Military Families in Canada*. 2018. <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/5fbcf542-d946-4d6f-b7f9-70ab8c466bb4/State-of-Military-Families-in-Canada-August-2018.pdf.aspx> [accessed November 2021].
Stats provided by DGMPPRA - "Office of the Ombudsman Questions". 2021.

Personal circumstances

To sustain operations, the CAF requires Regular Force members to be fit, deployable and employable.⁶ Sometimes personal circumstances can make fulfilling CAF duties challenging.

To address these personal circumstances, the CAF issued DAOD 5003-6 in 2001 and updated it in 2008. This policy recognizes that “personal circumstances may arise that temporarily limit a CAF member’s deployability or ability to perform duties. The CAF may give special consideration to members in the form of a contingency cost move or compassionate status, with or without a compassionate posting.”

What is a contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting?

In accordance with DAOD 5003-6, two options are available to CAF members experiencing personal circumstances:

- contingency cost move; or
- compassionate status (with or without a compassionate posting).

Contingency cost moves allow a CAF member to move to a specific location for personal reasons, such as to help or establish care for ill family members or due to the lack of appropriate medical resources for families at the current posting location. Under a contingency cost move, the member remains employable and deployable. Barring exceptional circumstances, contingency cost moves can only be granted once for the same circumstance.

A compassionate status is assigned to a CAF member when a personal circumstance “limits their deployability or ability to perform duties.”⁷ CAF members assigned a compassionate status either remain in their current post or can request a compassionate posting to a Base/Wing or unit that allows the CAF member and their family to provide or receive support not found at their current location.⁸

Between 2017 and 2021, there have been, on average, 8816 relocations a year within Canada⁹. In other words, approved requests for contingency cost moves, compassionate status and compassionate postings represent roughly one percent of annual relocations.

6 Department of DAOD 5023-0 National Defence. *DAOD 5023-0, Universality of Service*. 2006. [DAOD 5023-0, Universality of Service - Canada.ca](#) [accessed November 2021].

7 Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5003-6, Contingency Cost Moves for Personal Reasons, Compassionate Status and Compassionate Posting*. 2001. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5003/5003-6-contingency-cost-moves-for-personal-reasons-compassionate-status-and-compassionate-posting.html> [accessed November 2021].

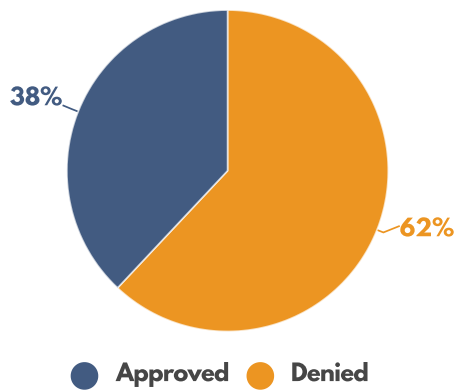
8 Department of National Defence. *DND/CAF Ombudsman sample cases*. 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/sample-cases.html> [accessed 31 January 2022].

9 Data provided by DGMC on 9 December 9, 2021.

Graph 2: Requests for contingency cost moves, compassionate status and compassionate postings

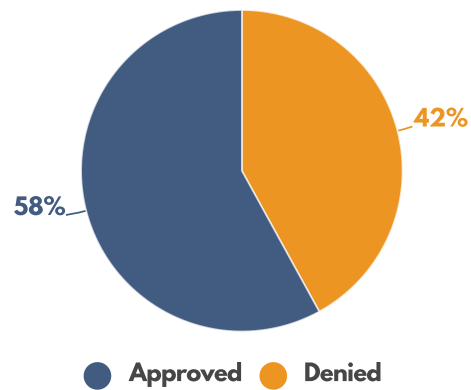
Contingency cost move
requests received between
September 2017 and March 2021:

Total requests = 245



Compassionate status and compassionate
posting requests received between
September 2017 and March 2021:

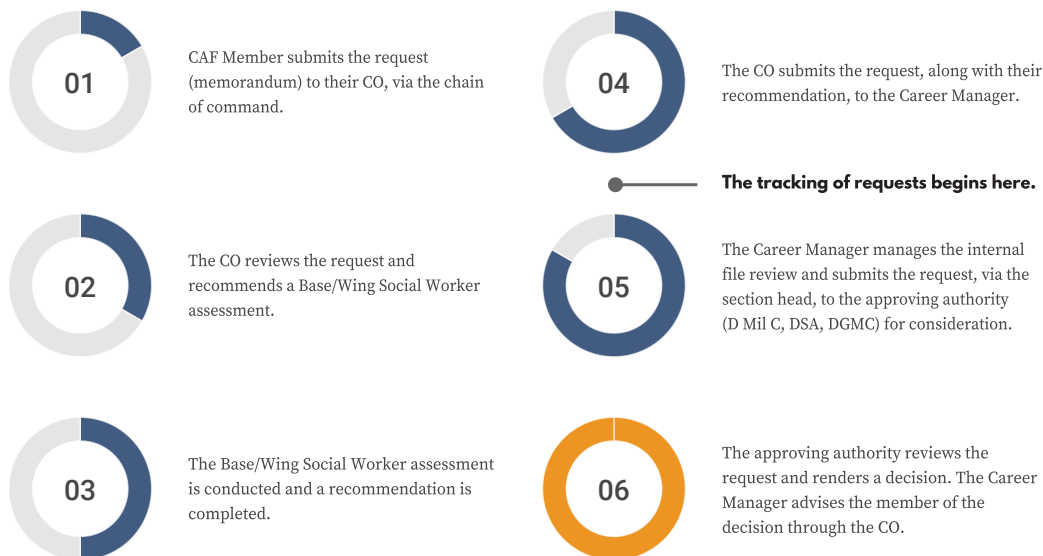
Total requests = 411



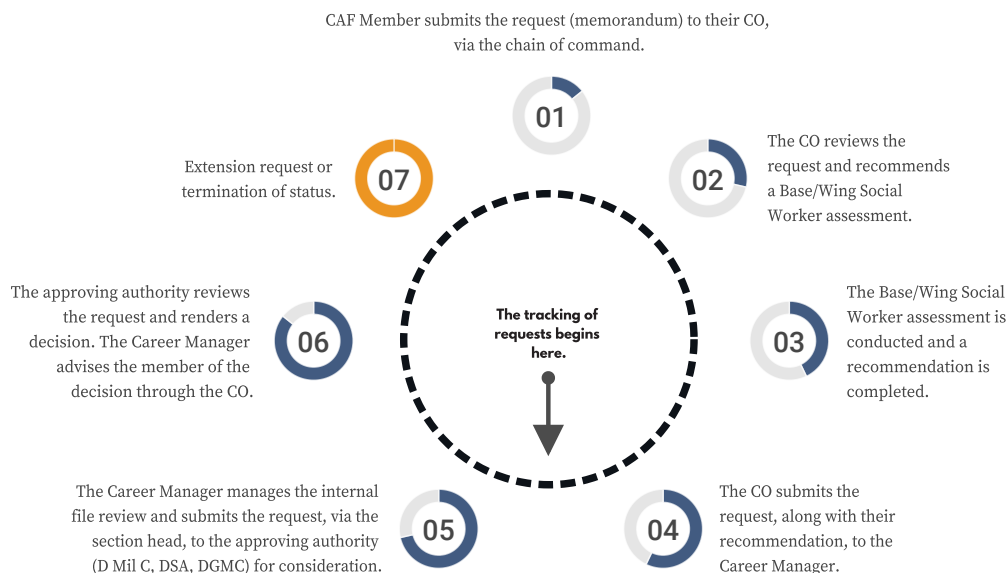
10

Graphs 3 and 4 present the overall process for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings.

Graph 3: Contingency cost moves process map



Graph 4: Compassionate status and compassionate postings process map



Gender Based Analysis (GBA) Plus considerations

SSE states that GBA Plus must be integrated in all defence activities across the CAF and the DND.¹¹ [DAOD 5044-1, Families](#), last modified in 2002, states that the CAF “acknowledges the ever-changing structure, composition and function of Canadian families.”

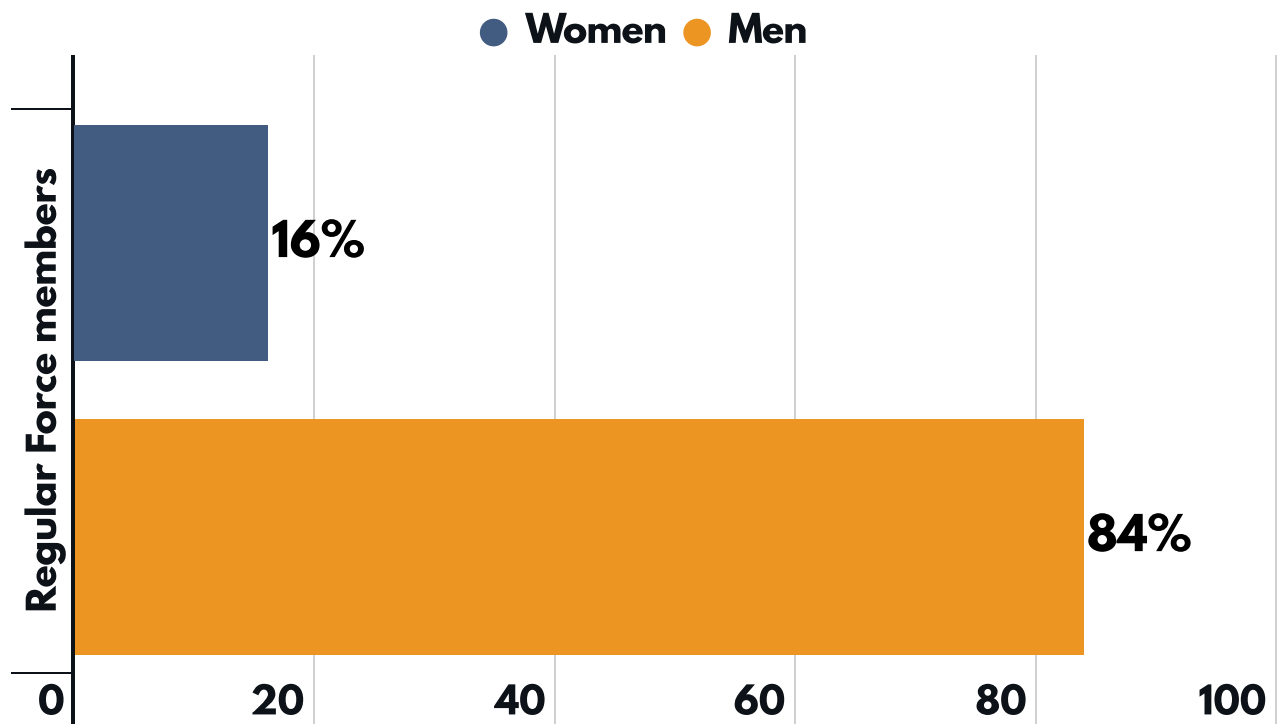
Did You Know?

“GBA+ is an analytical process that provides a rigorous method for the assessment of systemic inequalities, as well as a means to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The “plus” in GBA+ acknowledges that GBA+ is not just about differences between biological (sexes) and socio-cultural (genders). We all have multiple characteristics that intersect and contribute to who we are [...], [such as] race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability [...].”¹²

Since 2002, when the CAF became subject to the *Employment Equity Act*, designated group representation in the Regular Force increased¹³: 3.2 percent in women, 6.9 percent in visible minorities, and 1.2 percent in Indigenous¹⁴ members.¹⁵ Approximately seven percent of CAF members identify as having dependants with disabilities.¹⁶ More than two thirds of the CAF is comprised of junior ranks.¹⁷ Also, 24 percent of Regular Force women are single parents; 28 percent are caring for a child with disabilities; and 24 percent are caring for a dependent parent.¹⁸

- 11 Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. 2017. <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/index.asp> [accessed November 2021].
- 12 Women and Gender Equality Canada. *What is Gender-based Analysis Plus*. 2021. <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus/what-gender-based-analysis-plus.html> [accessed March 2022].
- 13 Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer. *Canadian Forces Employment Equity Report 2010 – 2011*. 2011. https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2014/mdn-dnd/D3-31-2011-eng.pdf [accessed January 2022].
- 14 The *Employment Equity Act* refers to Indigenous Peoples areas Aboriginal Peoples.
- 15 Data from 2002 (since the CAF has been subject to the Employment Equity Act) from the Canadian Human Rights Commission Employment Equity Act Audit – December 2007. Data from 2021 from DGMPPRA *Data calculated to show the difference
- 16 Relocation Experiences – The experiences of Military Families with Relocations du to Postings Survey Results. 2018. [https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/FamilyResearch/Documents/2018 Research on Families/Relocation Experiences Research Report May 2018.pdf](https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/FamilyResearch/Documents/2018%20Research%20on%20Families/Relocation%20Experiences%20Research%20Report%20May%202018.pdf) p.15 [accessed November 2021].
- 17 Government of Canada. *Canadian Armed Forces Regular Force Members by Rank*. 2020. <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/460aa2e0-5a37-47cf-a858-98b4327d29de> [accessed February 2022].
- 18 Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services. *State of Military Families in Canada*. 2018. <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/5fbcf542-d946-4d6f-b7f9-70ab8c466bb4/State-of-Military-Families-in-Canada-August-2018.pdf.aspx> [accessed November 2021].

**Graph 5:
Regular Force demographics**



Section II: Introduction

Regular Force CAF members and their families experience unique challenges because of the frequent relocations that are part of military requirements. Circumstances may arise that temporarily limit a CAF member's employability or deployability, which may prompt a request for a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or compassionate posting.

Between 1 September 2017 and 31 March 2021, this office received 84 complaints related to the administration of contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings. We also heard these issues at multiple outreach events at Bases and Wings across Canada.¹⁹

Overall, compassionate postings are a positive and beneficial option available to CAF members and their families to help them address their personal circumstances.

This investigation focuses on the major issues related to and impacts resulting from the governing policy (DAOD 5003-6) and the administration of contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings.

With this investigation, we assessed and gained a better understanding of the:

- policy framework governing contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings;
- compassionate posting process;
- current demographics of a Regular Force CAF “family”;
- administration of compassionate postings and its compliance with the policy framework;
- consideration of CAF family demographics in the policy;
- fairness of the compassionate posting decision-making and approval process;
- internal and external barriers or factors that could preclude compliance with the policy framework;
- gaps and inconsistencies in the administration of compassionate postings; and
- impact of any identified benefits and deficiencies on members, families, and the organization.

Information on the scope, limitations, data collected, and interviews conducted are outlined in [Appendix C—Methodology](#).

¹⁹ Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman. Complaint Files.

Section III: Findings

Policy and process

Finding 1: The DND/CAF has not fully reviewed DAOD 5003-6, Contingency Cost moves for Personal Reasons, Compassionate Status and Compassionate Posting since 2008.

The Director Military Careers Policy and Grievances (DMCPG) is responsible for DAOD 5003-6 and confirmed that it has not been reviewed since 2008. No review has been scheduled, despite the requirement in DAOD 1000-7 to review DAODs every three to five years.²⁰ Director General Military Careers (DGMCC) stated that the review of DAOD 5003-6 will be a complex activity given its linkages to other policies, such as DAOD 5023-0, Universality of Service.

GBA Plus

DAOD 5003-6 predates the CAF-wide implementation of GBA Plus²¹ in 2016 for all policy instruments. SSE states that GBA Plus must be integrated in all defence activities across the CAF and the DND, though it did not specify a timeline for implementation.²² Several stakeholders interviewed, including the policy holder, indicated that the lack of GBA Plus considerations was a gap in the policy. Examples of this gap include references to gender as a binary, and outdated references to various Navy ranks.

20 Department of National Defence. DAOD 1000-7, *Policy Framework for Military Personnel Management*. 2017. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/1000-series/1000/1000-7-policy-framework-military-personnel-management.html> [accessed November 2021].

21 GBA+ is an analytical tool used to assess the potential impacts of policies, programs, services, and other initiatives on diverse groups of people, and considers gender and a range of other identity factors. (*Strong, Secure, Engaged*)

22 Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. 2017. <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/index.asp> [accessed November 2021].

This gap could deter families who do not see themselves reflected in the policy from submitting a compassionate posting request.²³ Without recent review and input from all relevant stakeholders, decision makers may not be assessing all aspects of various family structures.

Did You Know?

Agreements about children of divorced or separated parents need to be respected. The data provided by D Mil C shows that approximately 8.3 percent of requests made between 2017 and 2021 resulted from either a parental arrangement or the CAF member's desire to be present in their child's life. Of those requests, 45 percent were granted by the approving authority.²⁴

Most CAF members (72 percent) interviewed felt that DAOD 5003-6 is not sufficiently flexible to support the realities and varieties of today's family structures.²⁵ Stakeholders interviewed, however, had varying opinions on whether the current policy is sufficiently flexible. Some felt that the policy was flexible and covered a wide range of personal circumstances but could be improved. Currently, the flexibility comes from those applying the policy on a case-by-case basis by D Mil C, Director Senior Appointments (DSA), or DGMC.²⁶

We always have the member and their families' interests at heart in our decision-making. In cases where there are exceptional circumstances, we will always look to be as flexible as we possibly can, and we work often very close with the chain of command to find solutions where possible.

— Stakeholder

Half of all interviewees (this includes constituents and stakeholders) believed that the policy is not inclusive and does not support diversity within the CAF. In response, stakeholders explained that the policy does not specifically address diversity and inclusivity and that the criteria are broad enough not to be discriminatory.

²³ Equity-seeking groups refers to those listed in the *Employment Equity Act*: women, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, and Aboriginal peoples. It also refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and two-spirit plus (LGBTQ2+) communities.

²⁴ Government of Canada – *Strengthening and modernizing Canada's family justice system*. 2021. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/cfl-mdf/01.html> [accessed January 2022]

²⁵ For instance, separations, single parents, shared custody, blended families, and multigenerational households.

²⁶ The approving authority depends on the rank of the member requesting the compassionate posting. The approving authority for: general and flag officers, is DGMC; for colonel/captain(N), is DSA; and for private/sailor third class to lieutenant-colonel/commander inclusive, is D Mil C.

Nearly one third of all respondents felt they experienced or witnessed bias, discrimination, or both in the process for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings. They raised concerns related to gender, age/rank (higher ranks felt it was assumed that they can handle the situation without a compassionate posting, while younger CAF members felt it was assumed they were unlikely to have families), and family status (single parents, spouses or partners not considered in move, and families with disabilities). DGMC outlined that “the compassionate posting process does not deny, deny access or differentiate adversely in relation to any individual on a prohibited ground of discrimination²⁷”.²⁸

When CAF members request a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting, their request must relate to their personal circumstances and specifically the needs of their family. For instance, a CAF member whose deployability is limited solely due to a personal illness or injury, rather than a familial circumstance, would not be eligible to receive a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting for that reason.

Did You Know?

Canadian Forces Health Services provides care and support, such as through Medical Employment Limitations directly to ill and injured CAF members. CAF members can also apply for a posting to a CAF Transition Unit to aid their recovery until they can resume regular duties, or transition out of the CAF.

Eighty percent of stakeholders interviewed stated that the process does not change based on differing family structures, except for service couples who may need to submit two requests.

The policy does not contain guidelines of what may be considered as ‘family’.

DAOD 5003-6 has no guidelines and does not contain a formal definition of family.²⁹ Throughout the interviews, interpretations of ‘family’ ranged from the immediate household, parents, spouses or partners, children, next of kin, those listed on the Military Personnel Record Resume (MPRR), and extended family.

²⁷ There are 13 grounds of discrimination that are prohibited under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*:

Race; National or ethnic origin; Colour; Religion; Age; Sex (including discrimination because of pregnancy or childbirth); Sexual orientation; Gender identity or expression; Marital status; Genetic characteristics; Family status; Disability (a disability is a physical or mental condition that is permanent, ongoing, episodic or of some persistence, and is a substantial or significant limit on an individual's ability to carry out some of life's important functions or activities, such as employment. Disabilities include visible disabilities, such as the need for a wheelchair, and invisible disabilities, such as cognitive, behavioural, or learning disabilities, and mental health issues); and Conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted.

Government of Canada. *Duty to Accommodate: A General Process for Managers*. 2011. <https://www.canada.ca/en/government/publicservice/wellness-inclusion-diversity-public-service/diversity-inclusion-public-service/working-government-canada-duty-accommodate-right-non-discrimination/duty-accommodate-general-process-managers.html> [accessed November 2021].

²⁸ Provided by Director General Military Careers. February 16, 2022.

²⁹ Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research released the 2018 report, “*What does the term Military Family mean?*”, which contained a thorough analysis of definitions used for family in other militaries (UK, US, Aus). The report found that most (apart from the US) had a lack of definition in their policy and that this was a benefit, allowing a broader approach in the application of benefits and services. This also allows the military to be seen as potentially inclusive to all relationships, including parents, siblings, and close friends.

D Mil C indicated that the policy is flexible on who can be considered as family for requests and that each situation is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. It is the exceptionality of the situation, not the relationship, that will result in a successful request. Not having a formal definition of family allows the approving authorities to exercise subjectivity and flexibility in their interpretation and approval of various types of personal circumstances.

The whole point is to find out the unique circumstances of that family. Everybody's circumstances are different, every family is different [...]. There are many ways to make up a family and we absolutely take all of that into account.

— Stakeholder

However, the lack of guidelines surrounding what could constitute a family or personal circumstances can create confusion for CAF members requesting a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting.

There is confusion surrounding the process for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings.

Constituents and some stakeholders interviewed did not understand the different criteria and implications of contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings identified in DAOD 5003-6.

As outlined in the DAOD 5003-6, the different options have varying impacts on CAF members' careers such as deployability, promotions, and training. A compassionate status or compassionate posting implies that the CAF member must limit their mobility and work duties while they are on the status. A contingency cost move requires that the CAF member and their family be relocated to a specific geographic location where the CAF member can remain fully deployable and employable. Additionally, the different options follow different processes. CAF members must go through the file review and approval process again to remove the compassionate status or to obtain an extension.³⁰ Contingency cost moves do not have such a requirement.

Although CAF members can request the policy option they want, the approving authority makes the final decision in consultation with the CAF member based on the limitations to their employability and deployability. However, this step in the process is not explained in the policy. It contains no guidelines or eligibility criteria to help members determine requirements as they relate to exceptional personal circumstances. The DAOD also only specifies a requirement for the exceptionality of personal circumstances for contingency cost moves, but not for compassionate status and compassionate postings. However, the Base/Wing Social Workers, Commanding Officers, Career Managers, and approving authorities interviewed stated that this was a criterion for all policy options. CAF members submitting requests for a compassionate status or compassionate posting may be unaware that the approving authority is evaluating their file for exceptionality.

30 Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5019-2, Administrative Review*. 2006. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5019/5019-2-administrative-review.html> [accessed February 2022].

No formal definition or clear example of an “exceptional personal circumstance” exists.

DAOD 5003-6 and D Mil C’s Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) do not define or contain any examples of “exceptional personal circumstances”. Social Workers refer to the *Canadian Forces Health Services Group Instructions 5100-43—Social Worker Report* to formulate their assessments. The instructions define exceptional personal circumstances as: “those situations in a member’s life that are out of the ordinary, unusual, unforeseen and unavoidable”.³¹ Constituents and some stakeholders interviewed were not aware of how exceptionality is determined in assessments, or its criteria, constituting a gap in the policy.

I think the main problem that should be resolved is giving more information to members and [...] also to the chain of command, i.e. what are the steps and what is an exceptional situation. Because each person that comes to us sees their situation as exceptional, and I understand them. But in the CAF overall, what is exceptional? This is what needs to be explained again and again.

— Stakeholder

CAF members interviewed indicated that without additional clarification on what constitutes an “exceptional personal circumstance,” Commanding Officers could not provide guidance on whether the request might have met the criteria for the approving authority and were unsure how to assist the CAF member throughout the process.

The two-year timeframe outlined in DAOD 5003-6 is not flexible enough to address all personal circumstances.

According to DAOD 5023-0, *Universality of Service*, “The principle of universality of service or “soldier first” principle holds that CAF members are liable to perform general military duties [...] [which] may include, but is not limited to, the requirement to be physically fit, employable, and deployable for general operational duties.”³² Therefore, for the CAF to remain operational and effective, there is limited capacity for the CAF to retain members who do not meet the Universality of Service on a long-term basis.

31 National Defence. *Canadian Forces Health Services Group Instructions 5100-43—Social Worker Report*. 2013. [accessed November 2021].

32 Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5023-0, Universality of Service*. 2006. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5023/5023-0-universality-of-service.html> [accessed November 2021].

DAOD 5003-6 outlines that the duration of a contingency cost move for personal reasons is usually the same as a standard posting for CAF members of the same rank and military occupation.³³ In comparison, the period of compassionate status or compassionate posting normally does not exceed two years. The approving authority can consider an extension to a maximum of one year if the CAF member applies and if their Commanding Officer concludes the reason for the request is likely to be resolved in that period. Any CAF member with a compassionate status or a compassionate posting whose personal circumstances are not resolved within two years will undergo a file review to determine if a one-year extension should be granted, or an administrative review if compulsory release should be considered.³⁴

There are times when the policy isn't adequately flexible enough to deal with all of the situations. [...] Proving that an issue can be resolved within the timeline in order for the initial approval to be given is challenging.

— Stakeholder

The current policy holders and approving authorities who were interviewed could not provide a rationale for the two-year timeframe and why it was initially developed. CAF members interviewed indicated that the timeframe to resolve issues deterred some of them from applying.

Stakeholders and constituents interviewed indicated that chains of command and those involved in the process were critical of CAF members who waited until they have a posting message to submit a compassionate status or compassionate posting request. To find alternative solutions and receive supports, chains of command and Career Managers encourage CAF members to engage as early as possible when they identify personal circumstances that may lead to a compassionate status or compassionate posting. However, some CAF members interviewed indicated they waited to identify issues for the following reasons:

- They wanted to maximize the two-year timeframe. For example, CAF members with a disabled family member may wait until they are near the top of a waiting list for health care or specialized programs or services, or until the issue reaches a crisis point.
- The need only arose when they received their posting message; the posting location itself caused additional challenges in managing their personal circumstances.
- They felt that identifying their situation would result in stigma and career limitations.

³³ Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5003-6, Contingency Cost Moves for Personal Reasons, Compassionate Status and Compassionate Posting*. 2001. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5003/5003-6-contingency-cost-moves-for-personal-reasons-compassionate-status-and-compassionate-posting.html> [accessed November 2021].

³⁴ Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5019-2, Administrative Review*. 2006. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5019/5019-2-administrative-review.html> [accessed February 2022].

The contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting request process, as a whole, does not have service standards or formal timelines.

D Mil C indicated that they prioritize contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting requests over other career-related requests, but that the process has no service standards.

Some interviewees reported requests taking more than three months for a decision. However, none of the constituents interviewed were aware if this was an excessive amount of time. The length and complexity of the process discouraged some members from applying and, as a result, they sought alternative options such as releasing.

The absence of formal service standards or timelines within DAOD 5003-6 makes it difficult for the chains of command to manage CAF members' expectations and provide updates on their requests.

There is no time [constraint] on when people get answers. There's no time [constraint] on a request going to the commandant, a request going to the Career Manager, a request going in for an admin[istrative] review. [...] There needs to be some sort of time limit to this.

— CAF Member

Half of CAF members interviewed believed that the COVID-19 pandemic caused delays in the processing of their requests. However, due to the lack of service standards or formal timelines, it is unknown if the pandemic played a role in the delays. Base/Wing Social Workers interviewed confirmed an increase in mental health support requests by CAF members throughout the pandemic. This increased wait times, including the time to complete an assessment for a contingency cost move, compassionate status or a compassionate posting request. Career Managers indicated that once they receive requests from Commanding Officers, they are staffed using a file review. They reported that due to the nature of the information contained in their system, they can only access them on site, not remotely.

Some CAF members interviewed stated that delays were lengthier for junior ranks as the request went through several levels of the chain of command before reaching the Commanding Officer. They also reported feeling pressured to withdraw their request from various levels of the chain of command, who are not the approving authority.

Most CAF members and some stakeholders indicated that the only time-bound part of the process is the staffing of the request (memorandum) through the chain of command, which carries a maximum of 14 days to review and action. However, several CAF members interviewed stated that this 14-day turnaround was not consistently respected.

Base/Wing Social Workers have two weeks to produce a report with a recommendation once they receive all paperwork from the CAF member and any external professionals (such as family doctors and educators).³⁵ The instruction that identifies this two-week standard is only available on the Defence Team Network and was not widely known by interviewees.

Constituents interviewed outlined that there is little to no transparency when files are with the approving authority. Specifically, they were not aware of the status of a member's file, or the approximate time it would take for a decision. Not knowing when to expect a decision added to the reported stress level of the CAF member and their family.

There are gaps in the communication method for decisions on requests for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings.

DAOD 5003-6 obliges DGMC, DSA or D Mil C to render a decision and career managers to inform the CAF member, through the appropriate chain of command, of the decision. If the request is denied, the reasons are to be provided. D Mil C's SOP states that Career Managers should inform the CAF member through their chain of command via a Protected B letter or message containing the rationale for the decision.

During interviews, CAF members indicated a variety of methods by which they received this information from their chain of command, including in writing, in person/over the telephone, or both. A small percentage of CAF members interviewed stated they had not received this information at all.

The lack of standardization in how CAF members receive decisions from the chain of command creates a gap in the communication of key information, including accessing recourse mechanisms.

Finding 2: No tracking system, formal Lessons Learned framework, or trend analysis exists for the compassionate posting process as a whole.

No tracking system exists for the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process as a whole.

There is no formal tracking of the compassionate posting request until the Career Manager formally receives it and initiates the file review.³⁶ Once it reaches the Career Manager level, CAF members and their chain of command have no access to the file and cannot easily track the status of the request. For more information on the process, refer to Graphs 3 and 4.

³⁵ Department of National Defence. *Canadian Forces Health Services Group Instructions 5100-43 —Social Worker Report*. 2013. [accessed November 2021].

³⁶ Contingency Cost Move (CCM) and Compassionate Status/Posting Requests. 2012. Provided by Director Military Careers Standard Operating Procedures. May 6, 2021.

The current process requires requests to be sent up the chain of command. As a result, the requests of junior ranked CAF members inherently take longer to reach their Commanding Officers. CAF members interviewed mentioned that this led to delays in processing requests. Some requests remained unresolved for extended periods, or the chain of command returned them to the CAF member multiple times for minor issues, such as formatting.

Did You Know?

Chains of command, Commanding Officers and Base/Wing Social Workers can only provide recommendations. The request must proceed to the approving authority with or without their support. However, many CAF members and stakeholders reported a lack of awareness of the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process. Some CAF members interviewed reported their requests were halted before reaching the approving authority.

Due to the lack of a tracking system and service standards, constituents interviewed were unaware of the status of their request or how long the process would take. Some CAF members stated that they accessed mental health supports during the waiting period because of the additional stress and anxiety created during the wait for a response.

A majority of CAF members who followed up felt that they would be labelled as an administrative burden.

Transparency could be improved. I had no idea where [my request] was. [...]. Honestly, being left in the [dark] caused me a whole lot more mental stress than it should have.

— CAF Member

CAF members also outlined concerns with respect to the process, such as:

- a lack of transparency in the process **once their request was submitted and until the approving authority issued a decision;**
- uncertainty of where their file was in the process; and
- having to proactively follow up if they wanted any information or updates.

CAF members do not have any oversight of their contingency cost move, compassionate status, or compassionate posting request once it leaves the Base/Wing. Several stakeholders, including Commanding Officers and Career Managers, outlined that CAF members do not receive much information on their request until the approving authority renders a decision.

Due to the lack of a tracking system, the CAF has limited awareness of the number of contingency cost move, compassionate status and compassionate posting requests that are submitted but do not reach the approving authorities, such as requests that are halted by stakeholders as the file moves up the chain of command.

There is no formal Lessons Learned framework for the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process.

D Mil C outlined that they are continuously reviewing the various policy instruments within their Directorate.

Although D Mil C is responsible for Lessons Learned, there is no indication that they have adopted a formal framework, as required by DAOD 8010-0, *Lessons Learned*.

Without a structured Lessons Learned framework, DGMC may not have adequate oversight over the contingency cost move, compassionate status and compassionate posting process and there is no mechanism to hold reviewing authorities (such as Commanding Officers) and decision makers accountable for their roles.

No trend analysis exists for the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process.

Policy holders and approving authorities interviewed confirmed that although D Mil C thoroughly documents the requests received by Career Managers, they do no trend analysis, including tracking requests by locations, ranks, or trades. By conducting trend analysis, the CAF would gain awareness of broader trends, for example impacts on retention, and could then design and implement strategies to address the issues.

D Mil C's documentation of requests showed inconsistencies in terminology and gaps that would inhibit future trend analysis. For instance, there was a lack of standardized descriptors for reason for the request, and no tracking of whether requests went to the National Social Worker Group.

Interviewees had a limited understanding of the responsible authorities, including those who implement the policies and those who have oversight. This shows a lack of clarity in the policy, how it is structured, and how it interacts with other policies.

Finding 3: There are privacy concerns with the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process.

To assess the merit of requests for contingency cost moves, compassionate status and compassionate postings, stakeholders who provide recommendations on the request must review some personal information of CAF members and their family. This could include medical information, letters from medical or academic professionals, legal/court records, among others.

Constituents and stakeholders interviewed indicated that along with the request for a contingency cost move, compassionate status or a compassionate posting, CAF members and their families often had to share personal information with their chain of command and the approving authority. The requirement for personal information differs based on the CAF member's reasons for the request.

Constituents interviewed were concerned about a lack of privacy and potential bias in the handling of their request due to the involvement of multiple individuals, such as colleagues and the chain of command. Junior ranks reported being most vulnerable to this issue as the chain of command had more review levels involved. Some felt discouraged from applying.

It's very heavy emotionally to go through all this and to explain your problems to several people [...].

— **Family member**

DAOD 5044 -1, Families, outlines that “the CAF will promote effective communication between families and the CAF, while ensuring that the individual’s rights to privacy and protection of personal information is respected.”³⁷ Explaining their personal, and possibly traumatic, situation to several individuals had a negative impact on the mental health of some CAF members and their families. Family members interviewed indicated that divulging a significant amount of their personal information to their spouse’s or partner’s employer is uncommon outside the CAF.

Communication

Finding 4: There is a lack of awareness surrounding different policy options available to CAF members and their potential career impacts.

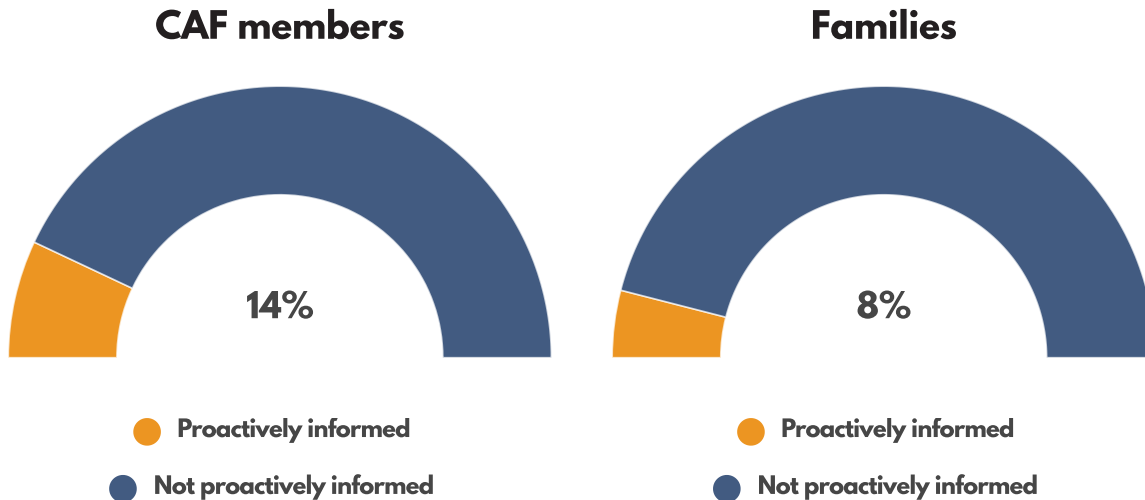
DAOD 5003-6 is widely available on a variety of websites. *Canadian Forces Health Services Group Instructions* and D Mil C’s SOP, which provide additional details and guidance on the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process, are not well-known and are not easily accessible to CAF members and their families. Due to their lack of understanding of the policy and its options, CAF members and their families interviewed expressed difficulty in understanding the process to submit their contingency cost move, compassionate status, or compassionate posting requests, and sought alternative sources of information.

There is a vortex of information, where you can search [internal file system] sites and everything else and the information is there. But knowing where to find it is very difficult. [...] Is the information there? Yes. Can you find it? Good luck.

— **Stakeholder**

³⁷ Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5044-1, Families*. 2000. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5044/5044-1-families.html> [accessed November 2021].

**Graph 6:
Proactive provision of information on the policy for
contingency cost moves, compassionate status and
compassionate postings**



CAF members interviewed said they found out about the policy through discussion with peers, their chain of command, Career Managers, and their own research. Over half of the stakeholders interviewed believed the CAF did not proactively provide information to CAF members and families on contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings. Others felt that since it was on the internet, it was accessible despite not being advertised. DGMC confirmed that DAOD 5003-6 is typically communicated to members annually by a Canadian Forces General Message (CANFORGEN) during the Active Posting Season (APS).

CAF members interviewed generally did not familiarize themselves with the policy before they needed it, and sometimes sought consultation. They noted that doing this while in a time-sensitive or stressful situation is not optimal.

There is a lack of understanding surrounding career restrictions for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings.

Although DAOD 5003-6 distinguishes the differences in career implications for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate posting, some CAF members interviewed did not fully understand the different career restrictions related to the policy options. Some members perceived, through interactions with their peers, that other CAF members were promoted or sent on career courses while on compassionate status while others were not. This perception resulted in some feeling that approving authorities were inconsistently applying the policy and treating them unfairly or differently than their peers—specifically with respect to promotions and career courses. DGMC stated that career restrictions are applied consistently in accordance with the policy.

DAOD 5003-6 outlines that compassionate status and compassionate postings may be granted when the CAF member is limited in their deployability and ability to perform duties, and that accompanying career restrictions can occur. The policy indicates that CAF members on contingency cost moves are not subject to these career restrictions. Given that there are several factors which determine the related career implications, this may be the cause of the perceived inconsistency in policy application.

For example, D Mil C explained that CAF members on a compassionate status or compassionate posting cannot participate in career courses. The approving authority must approve any exceptions.

As it relates to promotions, the policy states that officers of the rank of captain/lieutenant (Navy) and above, and non-commissioned members of the rank of corporal/sailor first class and above, shall not be promoted nor have any promotion protection during a period of compassionate status. The policy outlines instances where promotions can be granted while on compassionate status. These promotions are not merit-based, but are dependent on time in rank. Officers selected for promotion up to the rank of captain/lieutenant (Navy), and private/sailor second and third class selected for promotion to corporal/sailor first class, may be promoted while on compassionate status.

Did You Know?

Any promotion earned before a compassionate posting cannot be deferred to a later date or backdated once the member no longer requires the status. Promotions come into effect a few weeks before a Change of Strength (COS) date on the concept of good faith that the CAF member will be moving forward with the posting. If a CAF member submits a compassionate status and compassionate posting request on or near their COS date and no alternative options are viable, the posting and accompanying promotion will be cancelled if the request is approved.

According to DAOD 5003-6, promotion boards should consider members at eligible ranks on a compassionate status and the Career Manager shall confirm with the Commanding Officer that the requirement for the compassionate status still exists. **All CAF members remain eligible for promotion on the assumption that the compassionate status could be lifted at any time. Regardless of whether a member is on compassionate status, they remain eligible for consideration at annual selection boards for promotion to be ranked in competition with their peers.**

A CAF member's request for a contingency cost move, compassionate status or compassionate posting can be denied if no suitable position is available.

Both CAF members and stakeholders highlighted that a significant barrier in the contingency cost move, compassionate status and compassionate posting process is that requests can be denied if no suitable positions are available, even if the member's personal circumstances made them eligible. Some CAF members felt demoralized and did not submit requests as they believed they would be denied due to the lack of positions.

One of the most significant barriers with contingency cost moves and compassionate postings is the requirement for a position to be available for the member to be posted into.

— Stakeholder

Career Managers and D Mil C outlined a potential challenge when CAF members request a posting to a location where no Base/Wing or unit exists or where one does exist, but no position is available. DGMC confirmed that understaffing in the CAF (by approximately 10,000 members) impacts their ability to accommodate requests.³⁸ To maintain operational capacity, the CAF needs to uphold a level of staffing within each military occupation and at each Base/Wing. The CAF must fill key positions as a priority. D Mil C indicated that they are willing to relocate CAF members when appropriate; however, a Military Occupational Structure Identification Code (MOSID) and an at-level position must be vacant at the requested location. They also confirmed that CAF members cannot be assigned to certain positions, such as the Basic Training List or Military Manning Overhead positions, to facilitate a compassionate posting. However, D Mil C indicated that most denials are due to a lack of exceptionality of the member's circumstances, and not due to the availability of positions.

Remote work may be another option for CAF members who need to stay at one location but are required to fill a position in another location. D Mil C outlined that telework or remote work is an option but depends on the military occupation or position, and if a position can be lent to the gaining organization. **Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the CAF has reviewed remote working possibilities and issued the Canadian Forces Military Personnel Instructions 01/22 - Changing a Place of Duty and the Use of Postings to Enable Remote Work Options in March 2022.** The purpose of this instruction is to establish a framework for authorizing remote work.

CAF members believe that a lack of budget for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings or a maximum number of requests per year can result in the denial of a request.

CAF members and their families have misconceptions about the number of requests granted each year and the approval rate. Constituents interviewed felt that the CAF approved few requests based on a limit, which could dissuade some from applying.

³⁸ National Post. *Military Dealing with more than 10,000 unfilled positions amid growing pressures*. 2022. <https://nationalpost.com/pmn/news-pmn/canada-news-pmn/military-dealing-with-more-than-10000-unfilled-positions-amid-growing-pressures> [accessed February 2022].

Some CAF members interviewed thought that the approving authority granted contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings based on the budget available and denials were due to budget constraints. D Mil C clarified that they approve requests based on the criteria detailed in the policy and not on funding. DGMC and D Mil C confirmed a portion of the annual allocation of cost moves is reserved for contingency cost moves for personal reasons and compassionate postings; and that funding is not a determinant in the granting of requests.

According to D Mil C's data, 58 percent of compassionate status and compassionate posting requests (238 of 411) and 38 percent of contingency cost move requests (93 of 245) were approved between 1 September 2017 and 31 March 2021.³⁹

Requests for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings can increase the workloads of Base/Wing Social Workers, Career Managers and approving authorities.

CAF members can request contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings at any time throughout the year. Those interviewed indicated that when requesting contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings outside the APS, additional challenges exist, such as difficulty finding a position, difficulty securing housing, and that the posting may not coincide with school breaks or registration periods.

Those involved in the process outlined that during the APS (which takes place between March and August), they normally observe an increase in the number of requests for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings, which significantly impacts their workload. DGMC and D Mil C indicated in interviews that compassionate posting requests are a small portion of their workload but are often the most complex files. As a result, CAF members may experience delays in the processing of their requests during APS.

Most stakeholders interviewed who are involved in the posting process indicated that the granting of contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings often has a domino effect on other members, as these decisions impact other postings (cancelled, amended, or new posting).

There is a misconception that CAF members posted to CAF Transition Units (TU) are not eligible for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings.

DAOD 5003-6 has not been reviewed since the creation of the CAF Transition Group (TG).

³⁹ Data provided by D Mil C between 4 May 2021 to 5 August 2021.

CAF members and many stakeholders interviewed stated that the policy does not consider ill and injured members. Several CAF TU Commanding Officers interviewed believed the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting policy does not apply to the ill and injured because they are not currently working full time or in their occupation and rank. When CAF TU Commanding Officers must move individuals, they will review other options (for instance, Intended Place of Residence or attach postings to another CAF TU). D Mil C confirmed that CAF members posted to CAF TUs are eligible to request a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or compassionate posting if the request is related to the members' family circumstances and not their personal health. This general misconception amongst CAF members and CAF TUs about eligibility for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings could impact the number of requests by those within the CAF TU.

The limited awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process leads to its inconsistent application.

DAOD 5003-6 outlines the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting request process, however, CAF members and families interviewed still found the policy and process unclear. For example, some CAF members confused the authorities that were responsible for administering the policy (such as the Commanding Officers) for the approving authorities (DGMC, DSA and D Mil C). The lack of understanding surrounding the process, roles and responsibilities led to additional stress and delays for CAF members and their families while they navigated the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process.

Most stakeholders interviewed knew that the responsible authority for the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process was within the Chief of Military Personnel (CMP) or DGMC; a small number believed the responsible authority was the unit or Commanding Officers. Most stakeholders had a general awareness of CMP, DGMC, Base/Wing Social Workers, Commanding Officers, and Career Managers' roles, though some only knew their role in the process. When asked who had responsibility for the oversight of contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings, the responses also varied and included CMP, DGMC, D Mil C, Career Managers, and Commanding Officers.

The family members interviewed indicated that their level of awareness of the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process before being involved was on average a two on a scale of zero to ten. This level increased to five after going through the process. CAF members were more aware of the process overall than family members. They indicated that their level of awareness before being involved was an average of four and increased to seven after going through the process.

As some interviewees had limited awareness of the roles, responsibilities, and oversight of the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process, some were unsure where to go for additional information or guidance. Additionally, DAOD 5003-6 omits some stakeholders with a role or responsibility in the process, such as the National Social Worker Group.

While the National Social Worker Group's role is not detailed in DAOD 5003-6, interviewees stated they must provide a peer review when disagreements occur on the recommendation for the request between the Base/Wing Social Worker, Commanding Officer, and Career Manager.

Between April 2020 and June 2021, the Administrative Response Centre ([ARC](#)) received seven queries related to contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings. Most of these requests were policy interpretations or general inquiries.⁴⁰ Few of those interviewed were aware that the ARC could be a source of information or assistance.

As outlined in DAOD 5003-6, all files must go to the approving authority for a decision. Upon receipt, they process files consistently and verify that the submitted request is complete.⁴¹ Consistency is also ensured through Base/Wing Social Worker collaboration (when possible) and the Career Manager Section Head review of the file.

CAF members reported instances where their chain of command was unaware of the steps involved in the process and unable to identify the decision-making authority. Some interviewees noted that the chain of command or the Commanding Officer, despite not being the approving authority, halted their request or made a unilateral decision on the eligibility of their request. This can be attributed to misunderstanding roles and responsibilities. The more individuals involved in the process, the greater the risk for delays or misplaced files. Rendering decisions on contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting requests without the appropriate authority to do so does not promote a fair and transparent process.

From my own experience, [...] unfortunately, depending on where you are in the chain of command, your request won't even reach the Commanding Officer.

— CAF Member

If requests are halted or pre-emptively denied, the approving authority may be unaware of how many CAF members are facing personal circumstances for which they could be granted a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting.

The Social Worker's role is not well defined or understood in the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting policy or process.

DAOD 5003-6 provides an overview of the Base/Wing Social Worker role within the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process but does not outline their appointment, assessment, and report requirements. D Mil C confirmed that they do not make decisions without a Base/Wing Social Worker assessment of the member's situation, though this is not outlined in the policy. The policy outlines that the Commanding Officer will seek additional information only if insufficient information is available at the unit level or the Commanding Officer cannot support the request. As well, the possibility of a second tier of Social Worker review at the National level is not outlined in the policy.

⁴⁰ Data provided by the ARC between 4 May 2021 to 5 August 2021.

⁴¹ Stakeholder Interviews. 4 May 2021 to 5 August 2021.

Most CAF members and families interviewed did not know of the National Social Worker Group's role, unless that group intervened.

Base/Wing Social Workers interviewed indicated that once they forwarded the assessment to the Commanding Officer, they were not informed of the outcome unless the National Social Worker was involved, or the CAF member advised them. In these situations, the onus is on the CAF member and family to re-engage the Base/Wing Social Worker for support. Some Base/Wing Social Workers interviewed stated that not being informed of the outcome of the request hinders their professional development, their ability to provide guidance and resources to families, and assist CAF members with future requests.

Communication with Career Managers is limited and must sometimes go through multiple people in the chain of command.

Most CAF members interviewed believe that—unless they are of higher rank or have peers who are Career Managers—they did not have direct access to their Career Managers. They indicated that requests to communicate with their Career Manager had to be forwarded through their chain of command, which could consist of multiple people, and that any of them might halt their request.

Needing to repeat your request to [all those in the chain of command] who you meet, to talk to you about the same things, the same processes, while trying to discourage you at each level, telling you not to do this because you're wasting your time [...].

— CAF member

Career Managers interviewed stated that all CAF members can contact them directly for information and guidance.⁴²

The Chaplains' role and responsibilities within the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process is not well understood.

DAOD 5003-6 outlines the Chaplain's role to refer CAF members with personal circumstances to the Base/Wing Social Worker and the Commanding Officer. They also engage with, and provide advice to, Base/Wing Social Workers and Commanding Officers as they make their recommendation on the requests. The Commanding Officer may seek their input on the nature and the extent of the member's personal circumstances when they have insufficient information.

Constituents stated that Chaplains were very accessible to them throughout the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process, engaging with the chain of command, and providing moral support and guidance on the process.

⁴² Department of National Defence. *Military Career Managers*. 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/caf-members/career/military-career-managers.html> [accessed January 2022].

Stakeholders indicated that Chaplains act as a support to CAF members and families, often early in the process. Base/Wing Social Workers and Commanding Officers confirmed that the perspective of the Chaplains can be valuable, and they consider it in their recommendations.

Chaplain services are one of the few avenues within the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process where family members can communicate directly with Chaplains and receive support. While the social worker assessment provides a clinical assessment of the family dynamics and needs, the Chaplain has no formal authority as it relates to recommendations or assessments.

CAF members lack awareness of the different options available to them, including the differences between a contingency cost move, compassionate status and a compassionate posting.

In interviews, families and CAF members' familiarity with DAOD 5003-6 varied significantly. Those with awareness indicated that they had done their own research, obtained information by word of mouth, previous training, or through their chains of command, Base/Wing Social Workers, and Career Managers.

DAOD 5003-6 outlines the general process and the differences between the options, however, members and families still found the process unclear, and several were not aware of the differences between the options even after submitting their request.

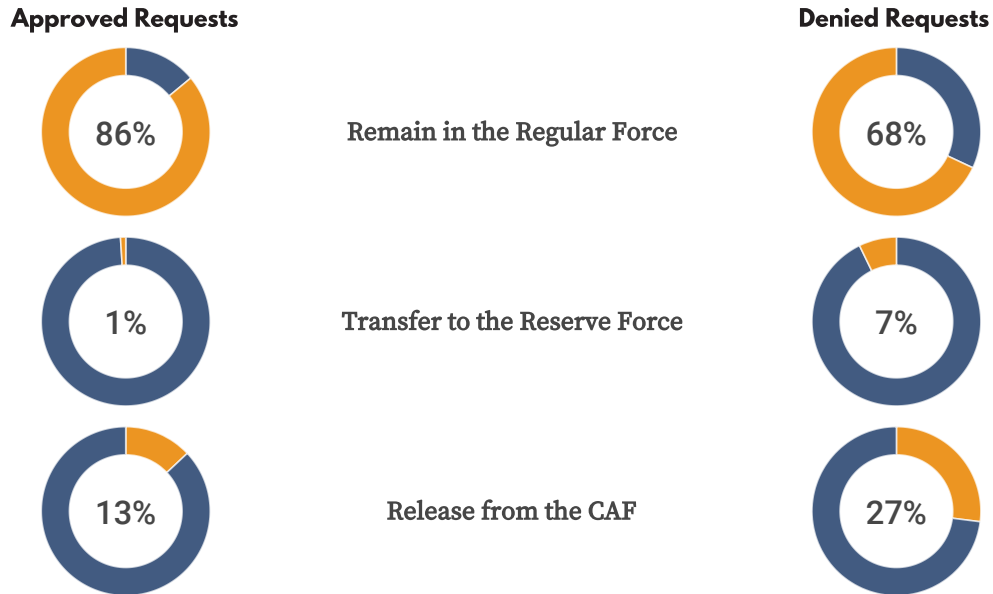
Some CAF members, families, and stakeholders interviewed stated that members who did not qualify for a compassionate posting could request a Voluntary Occupational Transfer (VOT), Component Transfer (CT), Imposed Restriction (IR), Leave Without Pay (LWOP), release, or wait until the next APS to discuss with their Career Manager. Other interviewees believed that the CAF member had no options if their request was denied. Most CAF members and stakeholders felt the chain of command and Commanding Officers should have discussions with members about their options and available resources as well as engage with Career Managers about possible accommodations. Some CAF members interviewed said they did not feel supported by their chain of command and/or Commanding Officer in this way.

Did You Know?

IR can be an option for CAF members and their families, allowing the family to remain in one location while the CAF member is posted elsewhere. This allows the family to maintain consistent health care, education, possible spousal or partner employment. However, the separation of families can create additional stress and hardship.

Two thirds of CAF members interviewed indicated that they would either consider or pursue a release if they were ineligible for a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting, and some were unaware of alternative options available to them.

Graph 7: Impact of approval or denial of requests for contingency cost moves, compassionate status and compassionate status on retention



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Members are considering requests for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings because they have limited options to address their situation.

Contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings may be a CAF member's only way to circumvent a posting to a location that may exacerbate their family's personal circumstances. During interviews, some CAF members indicated they could informally discuss potential postings with their chain of command or Career Managers; however, they felt these stakeholders were often inaccessible.

Members may pursue the options in DAOD 5003-6 to try and support their family, but if they are unable to resolve their situation within the two-year timeframe, the approving authority may deny their request. CAF members and families interviewed reported that these limitations impacted their health and morale, leading some to consider releasing from the CAF.

In 2017, the Journey initiative was announced. The Journey is a concept that follows the member from enrollment to release. It promises changes from current personnel management with a more flexible transition from the Regular Force to the Reserve Force. The Journey is currently undergoing policy mapping, scoping, and implementation, including the development of resources and reference materials.

Its operationalization would be an opportunity for the CAF to support members who may not meet the eligibility criteria for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings and alleviate some of the stressors. ^{44 45 46}

Finding 5: There is a lack of awareness amongst CAF members and their families of recourse mechanisms available related to contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings, and there are concerns as to whether these mechanisms are agile enough to respond to requests in a timely manner.

There is a lack of awareness of recourse mechanisms available.

For both CAF members and families interviewed, most could not name a recourse mechanism they could access if their contingency cost move, compassionate status, or compassionate posting request was denied. The CAF members who were aware of recourse mechanisms indicated that they could grieve the decision, request a second opinion from the Base/Wing Social Worker, or engage with this office.

⁴⁴ BGen Eldaoud. *The Journey of those who serve: The 2025 vision of the career of a CAF member*. Dated 16 September 2016

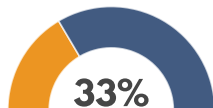
⁴⁵ Operationalizing the Journey Through a CAF Human Resources Strategy. 2021. Information and slide deck provided by Director Personnel Strategy. November 23, 2021.

⁴⁶ Maj Jason Chetwynd. *Accepting the Inevitable and Planning for the Future Needs of the CAF*. 2018. <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/405/305/chetwynd.pdf> [accessed November 2021].

Graph 8:

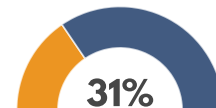
Awareness of and access to recourse mechanisms related to the process for contingency cost moves, compassionate status and compassionate postings

CAF Members



Were aware of the recourse mechanisms available

Families



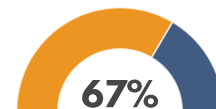
25% of CAF members interviewed accessed a recourse mechanism

CAF Members



Were aware of recourse mechanisms available when a CAF member disagrees with a Base/Wing Social Worker's assessment

Stakeholders



Stakeholders interviewed identified the following recourse mechanisms:

- engaging with the chain of command for informal resolution;
- requesting a second opinion by a Base/Wing Social Worker;
- requesting the file be reconsidered due to new information;
- submitting a grievance;
- engaging with the Ombudsman's Office;
- requesting clarification; or
- engaging with the Integrated Conflict and Complaint Management (ICCM) program.

However, no single interviewee could identify all recourse mechanisms. Some relied on the knowledge and willingness of their chain of command and Career Manager for information.

As part of procedural fairness and to address any areas of concern, CAF members should be made aware of recourse mechanisms available to them. Recourse mechanisms are not listed in DAOD 5003-6; a lack of awareness of these options may impact CAF members' ability to self-advocate and to clarify issues with the decision-making authority.

While approving authorities denied 282 compassionate posting requests between September 2017 and March 2021, only two formal grievances were submitted.⁴⁷ Without a timely and flexible recourse mechanism, CAF members interviewed felt that the formal grievance process could not appropriately address their situation.

According to *QR&O Chapter 7, Grievances*, the Initial Authority shall consider and determine the grievance within four months of its submission.⁴⁸ The grievance could then be escalated to the Final Authority⁴⁹, for which the policy does not include a service standard for a decision.⁵⁰ If a CAF member has an upcoming posting or immediate need, timeliness is a critical factor in addressing their concerns.

Grievances, because its 120 days or 90 days now, is perhaps not the best mechanism in the sense that it is not going to provide a timely solution [...].

— Stakeholder

Finding 6: CAF members and their families have limited knowledge of resources available to them at any point in the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process. This impacts families' ability to advocate for themselves, communicate their concerns, and obtain information about the process.

Constituents interviewed felt that the CAF should provide support, communicate, be transparent, and be considerate of family circumstances. As stated in *SSE*, “military families are the strength behind the uniform”; to have a fit CAF member, the family welfare needs to be considered.⁵¹ Most stakeholders agreed they have a moral obligation to provide support to families and that these supports are slowly improving.

47 Data on Administrative Reviews related to Contingency Cost Moves for personal reasons, compassionate status and compassionate postings received between September 2017 and March 2021, provided by D Mil C on May 14, 2021.

48 *QR&O: Volume 1 – Chapter 7 Grievances*, Section 2 – Initial Authority in Respect of a Grievance. 2006. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/queens-regulations-orders/vol-1-administration/ch-7-grievances.html> [accessed November 2021].

49 *QR&O: Volume 1 – Chapter 7 Grievances*, Section 3 – Final Authority in Respect of Grievance. 2006. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/queens-regulations-orders/vol-1-administration/ch-7-grievances.html> [accessed November 2021].

50 Department of National Defence. *Letter to CDS: Military grievance process Final Authority delays*. 2021. <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/reports-news-statistics/ombudsman-letters/2021/letter-to-cds-military-grievance-process-delays.html> [accessed November 2021].

51 Department of National Defence. *Strong, Secure, Engaged*. 2017. <http://dgpaapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/index.asp> [accessed November 2021].p.11

CAF members and families interviewed experienced the following challenges when relocating:

- accessing/locating services;
- financial support;
- returning to waitlists for primary care providers and specialists;
- finding spousal or partner employment;
- limited options for services in their language of choice;
- finding childcare; and
- navigating the provincial/territorial health care system.

Some of these challenges disproportionately affect women, as they are predominantly the non-serving spouse or partner, as well as single-parent families.

Many CAF members and families interviewed were unsure of what supports and services were available to help them address these challenges throughout the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process. They often rely on their chain of command, Health Services, Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC), and Chaplains for information and guidance. In the context of the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process, it is essential that CAF members and their families are aware of, and have access to, certain stakeholders so that they can obtain information, communicate their concerns, and advocate for themselves.

There are numerous stakeholders available to connect CAF members and their families with specific supports before, during, and after their compassionate request process. For example, charities in the Defence community such as Support our Troops⁵², True Patriot Love⁵³, and Wounded Warriors⁵⁴ provide military families with a variety of supports. CAF TU Commanding Officers outlined that their services and supports are also available to military families, though CAF members and families interviewed were unaware of this.

52 Support Our Troops. 2021. <https://www.supportourtroops.ca/> [accessed November 2021]

53 True Patriot Love. 2021. https://truepatriotlove.com/?gclid=CjwKCAiA4veMBhAMEiwAU4XRryHwKVMWWFqKvpYJFTCYUCDUuzFabJU238y-ffNxV3zdgCvhrGFixoCHiMQAvD_BwE [accessed November 2021]

54 Wounded Warriors. 2021. <https://woundedwarriors.ca/> [accessed November 2021]

All family members and most CAF members and stakeholders interviewed said that family services differ from one Base/Wing to the next. Director Military Family Services (DMFS) clarified that Military Family Services' (MFS) standard mandated service offerings do not differ between provinces and territories.⁵⁵ Although the MFRCs are responsible for delivering the overarching MFS program, they also offer additional programs that are locally dependent.

Did You Know?

Seamless Canada is an initiative between the provinces and territories that was launched to standardize the services available for military families, which seek to alleviate stressors related to relocations.

The Comprehensive Military Family Strategy aims to increase families' awareness of available services; support their access to required services; advocate for services to be available; and align service availability to support families with identified requirements both locally and nationally.

For more information on services available, CAF members and families can contact the [Family Information Line](#).^{56 57}

Over half of the CAF members and stakeholders interviewed felt that families could communicate their needs and concerns throughout the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process. However, many families interviewed (70 percent) felt the responsible authorities were inaccessible. This may be due to families' access to CAF stakeholders being primarily through the member.

⁵⁵ DMFS Stakeholder Interviews. 4 May 2021 to 5 August 2021.

⁵⁶ National Defence hosts the fourth Seamless Canada roundtable with provinces and territories. December 10, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2020/12/national-defence-hosts-the-fourth-seamless-canada-roundtable-with-provinces-and-territories.html> [accessed November 2021]

⁵⁷ MFS Stakeholder Interviews. 4 May 2021 to 5 August 2021.

For example, the Base/Wing Social Worker is one of the only avenues for families to communicate their needs and concerns to the CAF, other than through the CAF member and Chaplain. In order to make a fully informed determination, all family members impacted are encouraged to participate in the Social Worker assessment. However, while family members can contact the Chaplains directly for support, the CAF member must agree to their family's participation in discussions with the Base/Wing Social Worker and inform them of the assessment, which does not always occur. This created additional stress for some of the family members interviewed and inhibited their ability to self-advocate, as they relied on the CAF member to communicate their concerns to the Base/Wing Social Worker on their behalf. This disproportionately affects women as they are more likely to be a non-serving spouse or partner.⁵⁸

Did You Know?

CAF members should expect to be asked to include their family in their interactions with the Base/Wing Social Worker.

CAF members interviewed reported that Base/Wing Social Workers and Chaplains were the most accessible throughout the process, while Career Managers were the least accessible. Access to the chains of command or Commanding Officers varied.

Career Managers are a significant source of information and support throughout the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process. When CAF members were unable to access Career Managers directly, they did not feel supported which impacted their perception of their Career Manager and the process.

Stakeholders indicated that before a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or compassionate posting request is formalized, the chain of command should connect CAF members with local or community-based resources, or CAF resources including Health Services, MFRCs and CAF TUs. Those who identified services offered outlined that MFRCs, Chaplains, and Base/Wing Social Workers are available to all CAF members.

Although 70 percent of CAF members interviewed indicated that their chain of command supported their request, only 47 percent felt they received sufficient guidance during the process, normally engaging with additional resources, such as the Chaplains or Base/Wing Social Workers. Some CAF members noted that the chain of command's lack of awareness of the process and available supports was a barrier. They outlined that the chain of command typically did not proactively deliver information on supports, and that they often sought it on their own. Others reported more positive experiences when their chains of command provided guidance, options, and updates; provided moral and administrative support; and remained engaged.

Many CAF members said they had not received any follow-up after receiving a compassionate status, or compassionate posting. Those who did noted that it was commonly their chain of command that engaged with them. However, 74 percent of stakeholders indicated that they had follow-ups with the member before the end of the typical two-year compassionate period to assess if additional support or measures should be explored.

58 Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services. *Profile of Military Families in Canada, 2017 Regular Force Demographics*. 2018. <https://www.cafconnection.ca/getmedia/7b46894d-91aa-421b-912f-6293b0cab4b9/Profile-of-Military-Families-in-Canada-2017-RegF-Demographics-Report-FINAL-June-2018.pdf.aspx> [accessed January 2022].

A third of CAF members interviewed were unaware if their benefits, services, and care transferred with them when they were posted. Stakeholders confirmed that if the care is through the CAF (such as medical), then appropriate authorities should transfer the member's file to the new location immediately. It is the CAF member's responsibility to ensure they access the services they need and that their supports transfer with them to their new posting.

Various stakeholders, such as National and Base/Wing Social Workers and MFRC staff, indicated that a positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is the increased capacity of virtual support options.

Many constituents interviewed identified several individuals who directed the member to available mental health services and supports following the Base/Wing Social Worker assessment. Sometimes, it was member-driven, with constituents indicating that they accessed or researched available mental health supports. Other times, Health Services and the Base/Wing Social Worker coordinated this.

Mental health and support services

Observation 1: There is stigma associated with requesting a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting which impacts the morale of CAF members and their families.

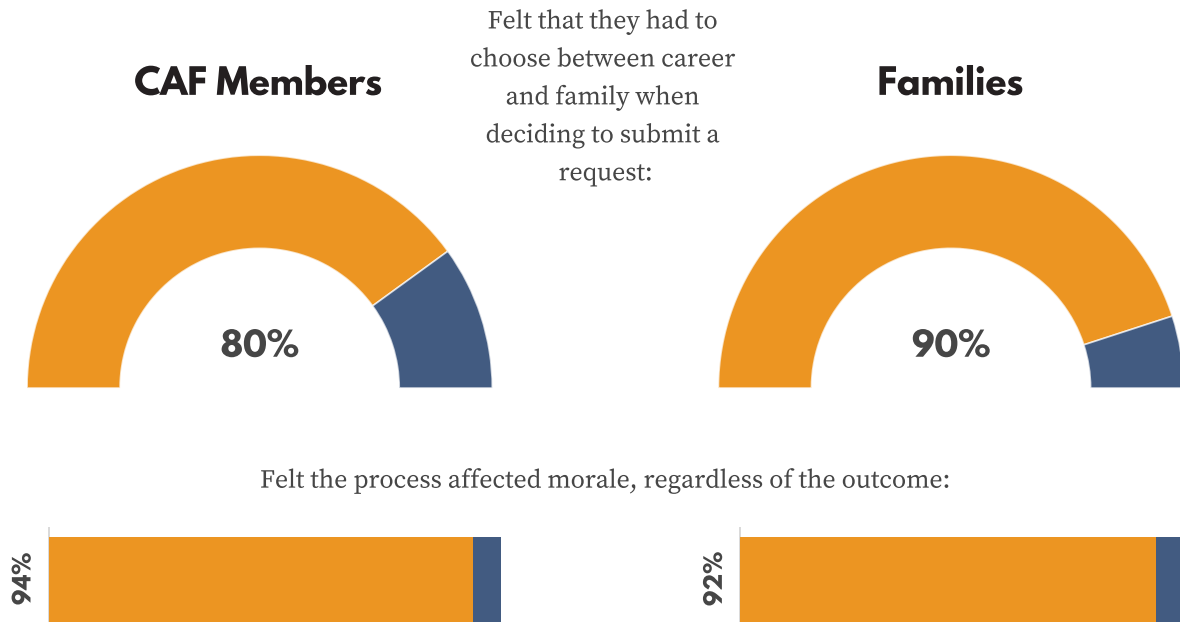
Some stakeholders confirmed that when evaluating requests for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings, they need to balance the needs of the member and family, and the operational effectiveness or needs of the CAF.

I think the culture of the Canadian Forces is that the family is very much a part of who and what we are, and we absolutely recognize that an unhappy soldier is not a good soldier. If they don't feel valued, if they don't have a homestead that is being taken care of, it can very quickly reduce our effectiveness [...] or they might release [...].

— Stakeholder

Most CAF members and family members interviewed believed the needs of their family were secondary to the needs of the CAF. Many reported feeling marginalized and stigmatized when requesting a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting. This impacted their sense of belonging in the CAF and their morale.

Graph 9: Impact of contingency cost moves, compassionate status and compassionate postings on morale



It was very difficult for him to prioritize himself and his family over a career he wanted for so long.

— **Family member talking about CAF Member**

Over half of CAF members interviewed (58 percent) indicated they experienced barriers when applying for a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting. These included:

- a lack of support from their chains of command and Career Managers;
- negative judgment from their units;
- their chains of command trying to dissuade a request submission; and
- receiving threats of posting avoidance and release.

After going through the contingency cost move, compassionate status, or compassionate posting process, they felt they were penalized and labelled an administrative burden, regardless of the outcome. Due to the perceived lack of understanding and empathy, and the stigma felt by CAF members, they stated having experienced a loss of faith towards the CAF, and they considered a VOT, CT, or release.

Some stakeholders were aware of the stigma attached to contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings, and noted the following:

- requests are often seen as taboo;
- there is misinformation about the process;
- requests can limit members' careers; and
- a general aura of negativity surrounds these requests.

It [a compassionate posting] has to be something that is offered to all members, without bias. So, you shouldn't feel as though you are looking for something, like a favour. It should be presented as the possibility that every member has when there are extenuating circumstances.

— Stakeholder

Other stakeholders did not agree. They indicated that members faced no repercussions or stigma when applying for a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting.

Over the years, the CAF has worked to advance the mental health and well-being of its members, including encouraging them to come forward when experiencing issues. However, the concerns raised during interviews indicate that the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process does not support open communication between CAF members and their chain of command or Career Manager.

Finding 7: The policy and process for contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings are insufficiently flexible to consider families with disabilities.

The *Relocation Experiences Research Report* from May 2018 outlined that approximately seven percent of respondents had dependants with disabilities.⁵⁹ However, the CAF does not formally track this information. This is problematic as it impacts the CAF's awareness of this group, as well as the challenges they face.

Based on an internal analysis of the data provided by D Mil C on contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting requests made between 2017 and 2021, approximately 13.8 percent of all requests stemmed from the desire to support a family member with a disability. Of these requests, 74 percent were granted by the approving authority.

⁵⁹ *Relocation Experiences – The experiences of Military Families with Relocations due to Postings Survey Results*, 2018. [https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/FamilyResearch/Documents/2018 Research on Families/Relocation Experiences Research Report May 2018.pdf](https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/FamilyResearch/Documents/2018%20Research%20on%20Families/Relocation%20Experiences%20Research%20Report%20May%202018.pdf) p.15 [accessed November 2021].

MFS recognizes that CAF families with disabilities can have unique challenges beyond a typical civilian one due to the military lifestyle.⁶⁰ Of the constituents interviewed, 77 percent of families and 56 percent of CAF members identified that they have a family member with disabilities. Family members interviewed outlined the following challenges when relocating with children with disabilities:

- finding and accessing services;
- spousal or partner employment;
- continuity of educational supports and resources;
- medical expenses not covered by Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP);
- limited options for services in their first official language;
- limited military housing with accessibility retrofitting;
- lack of childcare; and
- financial support.

Some of these challenges disproportionately impact women, as they are predominantly the non-serving spouse or partner, as well as single-parent families.

Those with disabilities often require a current diagnosis to access appropriate care, resources and supports. When families with disabilities are posted, they may have to restart the process for diagnosis and needs assessment under the new provincial and territorial medical care system, and this can delay access to specialized care. Additionally, waitlists for physicians or specialists can further delay a diagnosis. The longer the delay, the bigger impact the disability may have on the child's future and any updates become onerous and more expensive for parents. Approximately 50 percent of constituents with families with disabilities interviewed experienced impacts to family health care.

I think the biggest struggle for families with family members with special needs is the medical side, [...] that it's not so much to get posted to a location, it's to not get posted out of a location. The big issue is that compassionate status can only be for two years with the potential of a third-year extension, and then there is no guarantee that you won't get posted again. It used to be the argument was, well we have schools in every province across the country, we have hospitals in every province across the country, but it's hard to find a family doctor and then to get all of your referrals and specialists [...].

— Stakeholder

Sixty-three percent of families with disabilities interviewed experienced impacts on the education of their dependants. They noted that the timing of the posting impacted their ability to register their child with a disability into appropriate schools or programs. The education of children with disabilities is particularly impacted during a posting, as the services offered between provinces and territories differ. A new posting location could negatively impact their dependant's educational needs and delay their progression.

⁶⁰ MFS Inclusion Policy for Individuals with Special Needs 5390-0

Spousal or partner employment was also a concern for families with disabilities. While this is a concern for all CAF families, families with disabilities have additional challenges, such as the need to be home with children due to a lack of specialized childcare, more frequent appointments with a wider variety of supports, and the potential need for home-schooling.

Loss of spousal or partner employment can have a greater impact on families with disabilities as they often have significant medical expenses not covered by the CAF, PSHCP, or provincial/territorial health care. This also impacts the family member with the disability since their progression can be delayed relative to their peers. While most CAF members and families expressed having to choose between their career and their family, the impact on families who have disabilities is acute.

Most interviewees had limited knowledge of resources and supports for families with disabilities. Fifty-eight percent of family members and 46 percent of CAF members interviewed believe provisions for families with disabilities exist. Most interviewees had awareness of specific supports for families with disabilities, though some had no awareness. Our investigation was unable to identify a comprehensive list. For complex cases, families felt that the services were often insufficient or not available in their official language. Since the CAF does no official tracking, identifying the need for more resources specific to families with disabilities is difficult.

While MFS national programming does not differ between provinces and territories⁶¹, MFRCs offer different programs based on funding or community needs, including services for families with disabilities. As programs and services differ between locations, some CAF families interviewed, especially those with disabilities, did not know which services were available to them. Those who are already struggling through personal circumstances may find transferring or accessing supports challenging. Though the differences in programs and services offered by provinces and territories are outside the CAF's control, the introduction of Seamless Canada may mitigate this. Also, the implementation of the 2020+ Strategic Framework for Services for Military and Veteran Families aims to modernize service delivery mechanisms and offerings, based on various family structures and localized realities.⁶²

61 DMFS *Stakeholder Interviews*. 4 May 2021 to 5 August 2021

62 Information provided by MFS during Dept. Review

Due to the two-year time restriction, the policy for compassionate status and compassionate postings is limiting for families with disabilities.

For CAF members with family members with disabilities, compassionate status and compassionate postings are viewed as one of the few options to help them gain or maintain access to provincial/territorial or location-bound resources. Although the two-year timeframe affects every applicant, CAF members and families highlighted that it impacts their eligibility as their personal circumstances are often not resolvable within that timeframe. This is because families with disabilities typically require long-term support. As the CAF must remain operational and effective, only a limited number of CAF members can be unable to fulfill the requirement to be physically fit, employable, and deployable for general operational duties on a long-term basis.

DGMC and D Mil C confirmed that when exceptions arise, they and Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) would be the authority on those decisions. They indicated that they try to be as flexible as possible within the criteria of the policy but cannot go beyond the two-to-three-year timeframe and must also consider the needs of the military.⁶³

The policy's inflexibility with respect to the timeframe and the lack of alternative options for families with disabilities may impact the retention of qualified CAF members.

⁶³ DGMC and D Mil C *Stakeholders Interviews*. 4 May 2021 to 5 August 2021

Section IV: Recommendations

Recommendation 1: By May 2024, the Canadian Armed Forces complete a review and update to DAOD 5003-6, and by May 2023, provide clarification through official supplemental documentation available on the internet. This review or provision of information should ensure:

1. Eligibility criteria and limitations, guidelines and service standards are included;
2. A Gender Based Analysis Plus analysis is completed;
3. All reference documents that inform the process for contingency cost moves for personal reasons, compassionate status and compassionate postings, and available resources, are identified and accessible; and
4. That the rationale, the resources for Canadian Armed Forces members and families, and all available recourse mechanisms are included in any decision letter.

Recommendation 2: By May 2024, the Director General Military Careers, in consultation with other stakeholders involved in the process, strengthen oversight of contingency cost moves for personal reasons, compassionate status and compassionate postings and leverage data to improve their administration from start to finish. This includes:

1. A formal tracking system for requests and decision letters which is accessible to stakeholders and contains privacy safeguards;
2. Enhancing data integrity and quality controls;
3. Establishing a formalized Lessons Learned framework; and
4. Detailing trends in requests regularly and collecting disaggregated data.

Recommendation 3: By May 2023, Director Military Family Services develop baseline resources for families with disabilities to help them access information that is tailored to their needs, regardless of where they are posted.

Conclusion

This office set out to examine the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting policy, administrative issues, and impacts of the process on Regular Force CAF members, their families, and the organization.

The stakeholder groups, CAF members and families we consulted as part of our investigation demonstrated cooperation and professionalism. Stakeholders demonstrated their commitment to improving the process that governs compassionate postings—and by extension the quality of life for CAF members and their families—by collaborating with this office throughout this investigation.

The policy that governs contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings has not been reviewed since 2008, creating outdated references and content. The investigation uncovered systemic issues and revealed challenges in three main areas:

- policy and process;
- communication; and
- mental health and support services.

Addressing these areas of concern will improve the process that CAF members and their families, who are already facing stressful situations, must undergo.

The CAF's ability to provide contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings for members who are facing personal circumstances is essential. While these can be disruptive to the general posting process and a member's career path, the benefits far outweigh the challenges. Most CAF members with approved contingency cost move, compassionate status, or compassionate posting requests stated that their circumstances improved and were grateful the policy existed. Acknowledging and accommodating a member's personal circumstances can positively impact the retention of trained and valuable members. While compassionate status with or without a compassionate posting entails a two-year pause in career progression, it is time given to the CAF member to focus on their personal situation and put the needed supports in place.

The increase of cultural diversity and differing family structures within the CAF and Canadian society means that traditional attitudes and approaches may no longer be effective when looking at the needs of a family in a military context. Our recommendations, if accepted and implemented, will enable the CAF to take measurable steps towards improving the well-being of CAF members and their families.

Appendix I: Letter to the Minister of National Defence

31 March 2022

The Honourable Anita Anand, PC, MP
Minister of National Defence
National Defence Headquarters
101 Colonel By Drive,
13th Floor, North Tower
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2

Dear Minister Anand:

Please find enclosed the report *Service versus Self: A systemic investigation into contingency cost moves for personal reasons, compassionate status, and compassionate postings in the Canadian Armed Forces*.

This report makes three evidence-based recommendations. If accepted and implemented, these recommendations will bring long-lasting, positive change to Regular Force Canadian Armed Forces members and their families. Additionally, our office believes timely implementation will assist the Canadian Armed Forces' efforts to fulfill its commitment made to the Defence community in *Strong, Secure, Engaged*.

This report is submitted to you pursuant to paragraph 38(1)(b) of the *Ministerial Directives* in respect to the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. As is standard practice, we will be publishing the report no sooner than 28 days from the date of this letter. We would appreciate your response prior to publication so that it may be included in the final report. As in the past, we have offered your staff a briefing on the report prior to its publication.

I look forward to your response to our recommendations.

Sincerely,

Gregory A. Lick
Ombudsman

Appendix II: Glossary

Basic training: the first stage of training for a job or occupation in the CAF, aimed at imparting the fundamental attitude, knowledge, or skill to the required standard.

CAF Transition Group: is responsible for the care of all personnel posted to, or part of, the formation as well as the effective and efficient implementation of all ill, wounded, injured, and transition policies.⁶⁴

CAF Transition Unit: provides an integrated, one-stop centre for transition and casualty support for ill and injured CAF members and their families.⁶⁵

Compassionate posting: a posting approved to alleviate the personal circumstances of a CAF member who is assigned compassionate status.⁶⁶

Compassionate status: the status assigned to a CAF member whose personal circumstances limit the CAF member's deployability or ability to perform duties.⁶⁷

Component transfer: a transfer of employment between the Regular Force and the Reserve Force.⁶⁸

Contingency cost moves for personal reasons: moves set aside from the overall move allocation to respond to personal circumstances which do not limit deployability or the ability to perform duties.⁶⁹

Final Authority: the final level of review in the CAF redress of grievance process. If the CAF member disagrees with the decision of the Initial Authority, they have the right to have the matter reviewed by the CDS or delegate as the Final Authority.⁷⁰

Imposed restriction: an approved delay in moving dependants, household goods and effects ((D) HG&E) for a specific period of time upon being posted to a new place of duty within Canada.⁷¹

Initial Authority: the first level of review in the CAF redress of grievance process.

⁶⁴ Department of National Defence. *Canadian Armed Forces Transition Group*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/my-transition-guide/about-the-caf-transition-group.html> [accessed November 2021]

⁶⁵ Department of National Defence. *Canadian Armed Forces Transition Centres*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/transition/understanding-transition/transition-centres.html> [accessed November 2021]

⁶⁶ Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5003-6, Contingency Cost Moves for Personal Reasons, Compassionate Status and Compassionate Posting*. 2001. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5003/5003-6-contingency-cost-moves-for-personal-reasons-compassionate-status-and-compassionate-posting.html> [accessed November 2021].

⁶⁷ Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5003-6, Contingency Cost Moves for Personal Reasons, Compassionate Status and Compassionate Posting*. 2001. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5003/5003-6-contingency-cost-moves-for-personal-reasons-compassionate-status-and-compassionate-posting.html> [accessed November 2021].

⁶⁸ Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5002-3, Component and Sub-Component Transfer*. 2017. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5002/5002-3-component-and-sub-component-transfer.html> [accessed November 2021]

⁶⁹ Department of National Defence. *DAOD 5003-6, Contingency Cost Moves for Personal Reasons, Compassionate Status and Compassionate Posting*. 2001. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/5000-series/5003/5003-6-contingency-cost-moves-for-personal-reasons-compassionate-status-and-compassionate-posting.html> [accessed November 2021].

⁷⁰ *QR&O: Volume 1 – Chapter 7 Grievances*, Section 3 – Final Authority in Respect of Grievance. 2006. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/queens-regulations-orders/vol-1-administration/ch-7-grievances.html> [accessed November 2021].

⁷¹ *CF Mil Pers Instruction 01/17 – Imposed Restriction (IR)*. 2017. http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/assets/CMP_Intranet/docs/en/publications/cf-mil-pers-instr-01-17-imposed-restrictions.pdf

Lessons learned the adding of value to an existing body of knowledge, or seeking to correct deficiencies, in areas of concepts, policy, doctrine, training, equipment or organizations, by providing feedback and follow-on action.⁷²

Military family: all Canadian Armed Forces' personnel, and their spouses, children, parents, relatives of significance or people who self-identify as the family of a military member.

Note: This was the definition used for the purposes and scope of our investigation but may not be the definition used by stakeholders throughout the process for contingency cost moves, compassionate status and compassionate postings.

Military Manning Overhead: a personnel management device used to account for personnel who are not assigned, for a variety of reasons, to a specific position.

Posting avoidance: where a member requests a voluntary release for the purpose of avoiding the results of a posting instruction, and such request is approved, the effective date of release or commencement of terminal leave shall be set by the approving authority in accordance with military requirements. Each case will be considered on its merits but the member's preferred release date shall become a secondary consideration.⁷³

Service couple: where a Regular Force member or a member on Class "C" Reserve Service is a spouse or common-law partner of another Regular Force member or a member on Class "C" Reserve Service.⁷⁴

Spouse or partner: a person who is legally married to Defence Team personnel or in a recognized common-law partnership.⁷⁵

Voluntary occupational transfer: occurs when a member voluntarily requests to change military occupations.⁷⁶

72 DAOD 8010-0 National Defence. *DAOD 8010-0, Lessons Learned*. 2004. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/8000-series/8010/8010-0-lessons-learned.html> [accessed November 2021].

73 CFAO 15-2 – Release – Regular Force. 1987. http://corpsec.mil.ca/admfincs/subjects/cfao/015-02_e.asp

74 CF Mil Pers Instruction 01/17 – Imposed Restriction (IR). 2017. http://cmp-cpm.mil.ca/assets/CMP_Intranet/docs/en/publications/cf-mil-pers-instr-01-17-imposed-restrictions.pdf

75 Department of National Defence. *Engaged in the world: A systemic Investigation into the administration postings, assignments and employment of Defence Team Personnel Outside of Canada*. 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/reports-news-statistics/investigative-reports/engaged-in-the-world/report.html#toc17> p.85 [accessed November 2021]

76 Office of the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman. *Occupational transfer*. 2021 <https://www.canada.ca/en/ombudsman-national-defence-forces/education-information/caf-members/career/occupational-transfer.html> [accessed November 2021]

Appendix III: Methodology

This investigation focused on the administration of contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings for members of the CAF, both current and former, and their families. This office conducted the investigation within the context of the two main parts of DAOD 5003-6:

- contingency cost moves for personal reasons, and
- compassionate status, with or without a compassionate posting.

During this investigation, this office set out to understand the following, as related to contingency cost moves, compassionate status and compassionate postings:

- the current policy framework;
- if their administration is compliant with policy requirements;
- how they are administered;
- the impacts of their policy and process on CAF members and their families; and
- the organizational impacts of their process.

This investigation did not consult:

- DND civilian employees;
- casual employees;
- contractors;
- Reservists, other than those who were former Regular Force members;
- Cadets;
- Staff of the Non-Public Funds, Canadian Forces;
- family members other than those identified as having a family CAF member who went through or considered the compassionate posting process; or
- policies, services, and benefits other than those brought to our attention prior to or during the course of this investigation.

Investigative Plan:

This investigation included both the qualitative and quantitative research and data listed as follows:

1. Documentation research and literature review

Canadian Armed Forces

- *National Defence Act*
- *Divorce Act*
- Canada's Defence Policy—*Strong, Secure, Engaged*
- *Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Forces*
- Defence Administrative Orders and Directives
- Canadian Forces General Messages
- Various Standard Operating Procedures
- CAF Connection website
- Related grievances
- E-mails, presentations, transcripts, and other informal/internal written directives provided by stakeholders

Ombudsman Office

- Complaint files from internal database

2. Interviews with constituents

While most CAF members and family members interviewed as part of this investigation volunteered to participate, there was also a random selection of CAF members who went through the compassionate posting process. This office recognizes that the experiences relayed and opinions expressed may not necessarily represent the views of all CAF members, and their families who went through, or considered requesting, a contingency cost move, compassionate status, or a compassionate posting. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted by telephone and virtual questionnaire.

These interviews took place from 4 May 2021 to 5 August 2021.

In total, this office spoke to 131 current and former CAF members and family members:

- 39 CAF members who went through the process,
- 42 CAF members who considered but did not go through the process,
- 46 Family members, both through interviews and a virtual armchair discussion, and
- Four CAF members by questionnaire.

This constituent representation ensured our office had a thorough understanding of the process and impacts of contingency cost moves, compassionate status, and compassionate postings on CAF members, their families, and the stakeholders involved.

3. Stakeholder consultations

The investigative team consulted various subgroups within the following organizations:

- Canadian Forces Health Services
- Director General Integrated Conflict and Complaint Management
- Director General Military Careers
- Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services
- Canadian Armed Forces Transition Group
- Base/Wing Commanders and Commanding Officers
- Base/Wing Chaplains
- Military Grievances External Review Committee

These stakeholder consultations took place concurrently with constituent interviews. Our office spoke with 48 stakeholders from policy holders to process participants.

In total we spoke with 179 individuals (current and former CAF members, family members and stakeholders) regarding the contingency cost move, compassionate status, and compassionate posting process and the impacts on CAF members, their families, and the organization.

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