

WEBVTT

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<v SPEAKER_1>Hello again, and welcome to this episode of Defence Deconstructed on The CGAI Podcast Network.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I'm Charlotte Duval-Lantoine, Vice President of Ottawa Operations at The Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

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<v SPEAKER_1>On today's show, we're talking to Lieutenant Colonel Marc Kieley, Commander of the Canadian Leadership and Recruit School, to talk about the work the school is doing to support the military's reconstitution objectives.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Enjoy the show.

00:00:33.720 --> 00:00:36.540

<v SPEAKER_1>Lieutenant Colonel Kieley, welcome to Defence Deconstructed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's great to be here.

00:00:37.940 --> 00:00:38.660

<v SPEAKER_2>Thanks for having me.

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<v SPEAKER_1>We're chatting today because there has been quite a bit of news around recruitment in the Canadian Armed Forces.

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<v SPEAKER_1>You guys have reached a 30-year record high in recruitment, so congratulations.

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<v SPEAKER_1>That's fantastic news, and I hope that you can sustain those efforts in the long term.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But you are here as Commander of the Canadian Armed Forces Leadership and Recruit School, and I thought it would be interesting to hear the perspective of the person that does basic training and gets people started on their craft journey.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So before we get into all of this, could you please introduce yourself a little bit more to our audience, but also what

the Recruit School does?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Of course.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'm Lieutenant Colonel Marc Kieley.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'm the Commandant of the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School.

00:01:35.280 --> 00:01:39.460
<v SPEAKER_2>So since 1993, we've been the CAF's single point of entry for new members.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So soldiers, sailors, aviators, officers, in English and French.

00:01:42.860 --> 00:01:49.260
<v SPEAKER_2>Once our brothers and sisters of the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group and the recruiting centers, once they go out, they find applicants, they enroll them.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then the vast majority are going to start their careers, the regular force careers, with ourselves here at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And this is really where we turn those applicants into recruits, and really take them from being a civilian into being a soldier, sailor, aviator, a member of the Professional Arms.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So let's drill a little bit more into that.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Obviously, like a lot of our audience on Defence Deconstructed are former service members, but for those who don't know what basic training entails, can you delve a little bit deeper into what that looks like, what do you need to do to be successful, and what is next in those new recruits' career once they're done with basic?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, absolutely.

00:02:32.120 --> 00:02:34.640

<v SPEAKER_2>So Canada has a little bit of a unique approach to basic training.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I don't know of any other of our NATO allies who have the same approach, but since 1968, we've had a joint model.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So whether you're Army, Navy, or Air Force by uniform, you all come and you do basic training together.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The very first joint basic training class happened shortly after unification in 1968.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we've got all three elements in all three environments serving alongside, and they're following a joint basic training program.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So what we're teaching, training, and assessing is the ability of our new recruits to follow universality of service.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So what are those common military tasks and working conditions that every single member of the Armed Forces, not just the Army, or the Navy, or the Air Force, what is common to all?

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<v SPEAKER_2>That's currently defined by 14 duties and eight working conditions.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we train, assess those.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We also train, mentor, and develop the sense of ethos and the sense of professional expectations.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we're doing two major streams, arguably three, because we also do the administrative intake into the CAF, because everyone wants to get their paycheck started.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we deal with some of the administrative piece, issue uniforms to your first military dentist trip.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But from there, we really move into the space of explaining very clearly what the CAF ethos is, what are the ethics and values required by CAF members, what are the professional expectations of all new CAF members, and then what are the actual hands and feet skills, what are the actual things that we need all new members to be able to do.

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<v SPEAKER_2>For example, every CAF member, no matter what trade, no matter what service needs to be able to fire the service rifle, they need to be able to respond to a chemical weapons attack, they need to provide first aid or respond to a fire, and they need to be able to do that with very little sleep, in austere conditions, with very limited meals.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We really turn them from a civilian to someone who shows what it takes to meet universality of service.

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<v SPEAKER_2>From there, they're worth further investing in to actually be occupationally trained in one of the many hundreds of occupations of the Canadian Air Forces, and then follow off into actual service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, a joint trade or eventually potentially in Special Operations Forces.

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<v SPEAKER_1>One thing that you mentioned is the fact that it is administratively heavy at the beginning of basic training, and there was an announcement made as we were being told about the recruitment numbers, and that's virtual onboarding.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And for some people like me, who think, who have specific set ideas about basic training, it feels a little bit weird.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So could you please let us tell us about what that would look like, that virtual onboarding, and what it's going to do for the recruit school in terms of being able to maybe process, like have, sorry, more people go through the recruit school, either in Sargent, where you are, or in Gordon.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, absolutely.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So one of the major successes of the recruiting system over the last 18 months has been moving from a primarily paper-based system to as electronic as possible with the online application

portal.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So as you're applying, you're still a Canadian citizen, you're a civilian, and all your information goes in a special kind of information data bank for applicants.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You're not yet a CAF member, so your information is protected separately.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then when you make that transition to actually being a member of the force because all this information was collected when you were under a different status, we can't easily move it over into the environment.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So that day that you finally get enrolled in the forces, you show up at your recruiting center, you sign an oath, hopefully your family's there and your friends, and you take some photos and you smile.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You end up leaving with what is literally a big manila envelope full of paperwork that you need to sign.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You need to carry that with you to basic training.

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<v SPEAKER_2>A lot of the first week of basic training, you think you're going to show up, there's going to be pushups, there's going to be yelling, there's going to be rifles.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What you're really doing the first week is a lot of administration, because we need to do some pretty boring things that are also very important.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We need to sit down with you and we need to review your will, your emergency contact notification, who should we call if you get sick?

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<v SPEAKER_2>We need to start your monetary pay account, we need to make sure all your information is there because it could be the start of a 25-year career with your pension and your benefits and everything has to get done.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But that takes a bunch of time.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You spend a lot of time in the first week of basic training, standing, sitting, waiting for your turn.

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<v SPEAKER_2>This ends up being a fairly substantial portion of the basic training calendar is the first week where we're basically lining up, got to see the dentist, got to see the vaccination clerk, got to see the pay administrator.

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<v SPEAKER_2>A lot of time gets spent just waiting because we start our basic training platoons at 60-64 candidates on the first day, and they're all up to four platoons starting at a time.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's 260 plus candidates that are just waiting for their turn to complete a key administrative step.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What we're looking for with the on-board application portal is to have a much more seamless transition from the on-line application portal to an on-line onboarding program.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Once you do enroll and you're officially a member of the CAF, as much of your electronic documentation as possible would carry over to kickstart the administration, and you'd also enter an on-line learning environment.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Rather than just going on leave without pay for a couple of weeks between your enrollment ceremony and your basic training start date, you go into an on-line workspace, a lot like taking an on-line course, and you'd be able to fill in a lot of that paperwork and double-check it electronically.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We could go back and forth and have staff verify that it was done properly and save a whole bunch of time.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You could start working on your security clearance application, you could write your autobiography for your course staff and your instructors to know a little bit more about you and your peers.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You could potentially start having conversations with the members of your future basic training platoon, and you can start doing some on-line learning to set you up for success.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So those little things, there's a bit of a joke in basic training that takes a couple of weeks before you learn what all the different ranks are between the Army, Navy and Air Force.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We could teach you that up front in an on-line portal and save you getting yelled at a few times when you call a master bombardier or a master corporal and you haven't even figured out yet why they're angry at you.

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<v SPEAKER_2>There's a lot of potential there to move some of the administration and some of the frictions of that first week to let us get into training a lot faster.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So for us, it's an administrative tool, it's a better way to get information from our new applicants, but it also lets us further optimize our counter and get more and more roots through our system to match the growth demands for the next couple of years.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Team 212CD brings together Germany, Norway and Canada in a uniquely integrated submarine partnership.

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<v SPEAKER_3>One that is already underway and already producing.

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<v SPEAKER_3>At its core stands TKMS, the world's most experienced builder of conventional submarines, offering Canada a low-risk, NATO-aligned and economically transformative solution.

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<v SPEAKER_3>This is not a paper concept, this is a proven program, a live production line and a generational opportunity for Canada's economy and sovereignty.

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<v SPEAKER_3>Western Allies, world-class platform, generational benefits, Team 212 CD for Canada.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Just to draw a little bit more into that out of curiosity, are you going to do this in an asynchronous manner?

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<v SPEAKER_1>That is to say, everyone does it on their own time?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Or are you having your own platoons?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Everyone's going to have their platoon and then do all those processes at the same time in a nine-to-five context, for example?

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<v SPEAKER_2>We see it right now as being asynchronous.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The final planning is underway.

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<v SPEAKER_2>There's actually a new unit being created called the CAF Integration Unit, possibly the CAF Onboarding Unit, still the lexicals to be determined.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But they're going to oversee this process of that transition from recruiting into occupational training.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What we're basically imagining is set physical fitness training program.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The program would tell you every day what tasks you need to do, what learning you need to do, what fitness preparation you should do before you arrive.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But the idea would be that there'd be military staff supervising it, answering questions, moderating a forum.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But the goal is to be asynchronous though with the expectation that you are achieving tasks on schedule because the idea is that once you're enrolled and you start this program, be it two weeks or three weeks or potentially four weeks, depending on how much content we can load, this would be paid service that you would get credit for once you arrive and you would receive back pay.

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<v SPEAKER_2>There is a clear expectation that you must achieve the work that's assigned.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That'll help us merge the programs into efficient flow where you've achieved all these necessary admin steps that we needed you to, which lets us kick off exactly where we need to be when you physically arrive for basic training and we get to the real work of hard military training.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Do you have an idea when that's going to be fully rolled out?

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<v SPEAKER_2>This summer, the first staff for the CAF integration unit are being posted down to CFB Board.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Actually, a couple of people I know, some friends have been pulled into that as the initial cohort.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The technology is in development right now, the first staff are identified.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We may do in the media term to further improve the online application portal for recruits, to further digitize information coming in the door, so they don't have to fill out that next-to-kin notification form once all throughout their initial training phase.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's the space where we're making incremental improvements, but the end goal is clearly there.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's going to be a great way to better prepare people when they arrive for basic training but also to eliminate some of the administrative burden and make sure that all our staff, all our focus, all our beds are dedicated to the actual core military training component and we offer as much administration to pre-arrival as possible.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Okay.

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<v SPEAKER_1>That's interesting, especially given that-

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<v SPEAKER_2>I never thought I'd be so excited about an online application portal, but it's going to save a lot of time.

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<v SPEAKER_1>You know what?

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<v SPEAKER_1>So as you know, like recent Canadian Citizen, I got to say the portal to apply for Canadian Citizenship was so easy to go through.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So I'm excited for you guys to have a process that is easy for both the applicant and for the military on the back end.

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<v SPEAKER_1>If I can recommend one thing is go talk to IRCC on how they did that Citizenship Application Portal because I remember when I replied it was so easy, I kind of panicked.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I thought that was a trap.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So but I highly recommend because compared to permanent residency that was a breeze.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And so when you have everything well presented in front of you and easy to follow, even that can do a lot to get people to see their application through.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And I know that there's a big discrepancy between people clicking the join now and completing the application.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So honestly, like knocking on wood that can be rolled out fairly quickly because that would be quite a big move forward for you guys.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But you've been at CFLRS since the summer of 2024.

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<v SPEAKER_1>You are actually changing command this summer.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But what have you learned?

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<v SPEAKER_1>What surprised you since you've been at the school?

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<v SPEAKER_1>And what do you think you're going to be carrying forward in the next step of your military career?

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'd say there's kind of two big lessons I've walked away from.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And one is a bit on the personal, professional level.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I came through basic training at this exact same school in early 2007.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I hadn't been here for 17 years when I showed up.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I actually asked multiple times in my career to be an instructor here.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It just didn't work out.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I really didn't know what I was walking into.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I got a handover from the officer who was here before, which was a very good technical Canadian Air Force's handover.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I very clearly understood my authorities, my responsibilities, my funding, my personnel, my equipment.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I actually didn't know how much I didn't know.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And what I have found over the last two years is that what I didn't need was a list of things I owned and was responsible for.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What I needed was a couple of questions I should be asking myself every day to measure how my program was running.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it's something I'm working on very closely with my own handover.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Thankfully, it's a colleague of mine I've known for several years, so it's very easy communication.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'm not going to give them so much like the Excel spreadsheet.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'm going to give them those five questions that I think they should be asking every day.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Like, how is my program?

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<v SPEAKER_2>How is it working?

00:14:02.040 --> 00:14:03.460

<v SPEAKER_2>How are my staff feeling?

00:14:04.400 --> 00:14:15.660

<v SPEAKER_2>It's the questions you should wake up every morning and go take a walk around the unit and look at and understand the why of what you're doing and not just the mechanics or the policy piece or the Excel spreadsheet or the data point.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Understanding the why of your unit, the key potential failure points, the key levers to improve things or where things could go wrong is a lot more important.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Entering a joint unit that is inherently transient, like people pass through the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School, no one does their whole career here.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's more important to understand the why and the inflection points and the influence points of the unit than a typical procedural paperwork handover.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The other re-message I've taken on in the last two years is that recruiting under-performed for 10 years, but it's not a secret.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But a lot of people got situated under-performed to the point where it just became a form of like, yeah, well, that's what we're going to do for the next couple of years.

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<v SPEAKER_2>No matter what we try, this is what's going to happen.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I appreciate that our current CDS came in and said, that ends now, you're going to meet the targets, things are going to get better, and people achieve the mission.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We've certainly had a lot of frictions, there's been a lot of adjustments, testing, adjusting, trying new things and correcting.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But certainly, it's been a good reminder that we can do very difficult things, and we can overcome constant challenges and successively get better and find solutions and work together across the force.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's a super good reminder of the power and importance of institutional optimism.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Because if you tell yourself every day that things are not going to work, then your entire system is going to structure itself to not work at the level that it is currently not working.

00:15:39.820 --> 00:15:42.480

<v SPEAKER_2>And if you tolerate that, it infects everything.

00:15:42.480 --> 00:15:46.460

<v SPEAKER_2>It infects your procurement system and your transportation system, your housing system.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And we're seeing now a CAF that's very quickly trying to move to a growth footprint and overcoming that kind of inertia from 10 years of underperforming and saying, oh no, had we been optimistic in our institutional planning, we would have had more infrastructure, more military housing, more equipment.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So it's a really great reminder that if you're not optimistic, you're kind of forcing your plans to fail because if you achieve success, you won't have the infrastructure, the resources to get there.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Whereas if you're always trying to set conditions for success, you might not succeed every time.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But the worst place to be is to find out that you failed to resource your own success.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So definitely be taking that away moving forward, that institutional optimism at every level.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's really important if you want to do big important things.

00:16:33.020 --> 00:16:36.260

<v SPEAKER_3>This episode of Defence Deconstructed is brought to you by Irving Shipbuilding.

00:16:36.540 --> 00:16:38.720

<v SPEAKER_3>Canada's national shipbuilder is currently hiring.

00:16:38.980 --> 00:16:44.040

<v SPEAKER_3>For more information on the many jobs and opportunities currently available, please visit www.shipsforcanada.ca.

00:16:49.460 --> 00:17:07.340

<v SPEAKER_1>I'd like to add to that to bring the little CDL editorial is not only the arbitration of the system working in a certain way, but the military is truly getting out of this threat, essentially.

00:17:07.760 --> 00:17:19.580

<v SPEAKER_1>And I'm guessing that getting a proof to reach the percent of GDP in defence spending must have helped in part in creating that optimism that you're talking about.

00:17:20.000 --> 00:17:23.100

<v SPEAKER_1>So that's pretty nifty.

00:17:24.160 --> 00:17:30.180

<v SPEAKER_1>So Marc, thank you so much for joining us today, for giving you us your insights.

00:17:31.560 --> 00:17:38.480

<v SPEAKER_1>When you're not trying to shape the next generation of Canadian service members, what are you reading?

00:17:39.800 --> 00:17:48.240

<v SPEAKER_2>So I recently started going back and reading some older books on my bookshelf, and I picked up Neuromancer, one of the classic cyberpunk novels.

00:17:48.240 --> 00:17:52.260

<v SPEAKER_2>And it was kind of funny because I admit I'm a bit of an AI skeptic in my work life.

00:17:53.100 --> 00:18:06.020

<v SPEAKER_2>So I found it fun to go pick up a book, kind of the early days of the Internet, and where AI was essentially this malevolent force that was trying to manipulate people and achieve great evil designs on society.

00:18:06.520 --> 00:18:12.700

<v SPEAKER_2>And then I turn around and my chief instructor is using AI to write new lesson plans and training points for courseware improvement.

00:18:12.700 --> 00:18:14.580

<v SPEAKER_2>And it's going really well.

00:18:15.520 --> 00:18:19.700

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think I'm trying to square away my own internal biases or blind spots.

00:18:20.200 --> 00:18:27.740

<v SPEAKER_2>I'm like, okay, so there is a world where AI is not just a shortcut, and it's not just the end of human civilization as we know it.

00:18:28.100 --> 00:18:30.520

<v SPEAKER_2>But it's a really great co-worker if you know how to use it.

00:18:30.520 --> 00:18:39.960

<v SPEAKER_2>So I'm begrudgingly modernizing by reading about the past fears of technology as my own team is knocking it out of the park behind me using it.

00:18:41.500 --> 00:18:43.880

<v SPEAKER_1>Some advice for the digital service group.

00:18:43.880 --> 00:18:48.620

<v SPEAKER_1>Maybe that could be part of their professional development list of reading.

00:18:49.280 --> 00:18:58.860

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, Lieutenant Colonel Kieley, thanks so much for joining Defence Deconstructed and all the best in your last few months at CFLRS.

00:18:58.980 --> 00:18:59.580

<v SPEAKER_2>Thanks so much.

00:18:59.780 --> 00:19:01.780

<v SPEAKER_3>Thanks for listening to Defence Deconstructed.

00:19:01.960 --> 00:19:07.360

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00:19:07.420 --> 00:19:13.740

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00:19:14.020 --> 00:19:16.320

<v SPEAKER_3>Defence Deconstructed is brought to you by our team in Ottawa.

00:19:16.660 --> 00:19:20.520

<v SPEAKER_3>Music credits go to Drew Phillips and this episode was produced by Jordyn Carroll.