When we launched the last PERspectives Winter edition almost a year ago, no one could have foreseen that in a matter of weeks we would be thrust into a new—and still ongoing—work environment, one that would significantly affect the way many of us would interact with each other.

As the RCAF has adjusted and readjusted—ensuring our defence commitments continue to be met while we keep each other safe—we have sought to keep open opportunities for innovation as well as improve the overall wellbeing of our team. Op TALENT remains a top priority for 2021 and success has been steady. Most notably, the RCAF has two new occupations: the new Air Operations Officer and the RCAF Reserve Air Operations Support Technician, for which numbers continue to grow across Canada as the occupations roll out at more wings. We’ve made technical improvements to benefit our maintenance community, allowing them more time to work on airframes through easier access to timely information, and have streamlined some individual readiness and air maintenance training programs to help achieve a healthier work-life balance.

As we proceed into this new year, Op TALENT efforts involve tackling systemic issues within the training domain to determine lasting, long-term benefits. Firstly, this means optimizing the path to the Occupational Functional Point for all air occupations by mapping out the training flows for each occupation, eliminating or reducing gaps and redundancies, and establishing effective and efficient management processes and tools for those flows. Secondly, we need to establish a suitable update to the Basic Training List management system (i.e. objectives, oversight, and tools) to ensure that time spent waiting for training is productive, motivating and sets members up for long-term career success.

Increased recognition of individual achievements continues to be a goal. The improved annual evaluation process, PaCE, will be trialed this year starting with the Airborne Electronic Sensor Operator (AES Op) occupation, and the honours and awards process will be more open, accessible and timely.

Improving life for our families also remains paramount. The cooperative Family Sponsor Program will soon be renamed the “Family Connection Program” to reduce confusion with the military unit sponsor program. More news about this development will be provided in the next PERspectives issue, so watch for it.

Joined by all levels of the RCAF’s leadership we encourage open dialogue to find areas for improvement and to find solutions. In the coming months, RCAF General Officers and their Chief Warrant Officers will conduct Town Halls at the Wings, which will provide great opportunities for dialogue. We must continue to ensure all of our team-mates can thrive within an inclusive and supportive workplace. Working together, while keeping each other safe, we will continue to shape the RCAF of the future while striving to improve quality of life and quality of service today.

Lieutenant-General A.D. Meinzinger
Commander RCAF

Chief Warrant Officer Denis Gaudreault
RCAF CWO
The Multi-Career Perspective: Meet Major Mike Richards

Major Mike Richards’s military career spans more than 24 years and has provided a wide range of interesting experiences that come from serving in different occupations. He first joined the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in 1987 as a Reserve Force Infantry Soldier, where he served two years in the Princess of Wales Own Regiment in Kingston, Ontario. Following some time spent working in the public sector and going to school, he enrolled in the Regular Force in 1996 as a Gunner in the Artillery. Following that, he served in the First Regiment Royal Canadian Horse Artillery at Shilo, Manitoba. The desire for new experiences saw him apply for a Voluntary Occupational Transfer (VOT) in 2000 to become a Land Communications and Information Systems (LCIS) Technician. In 2014, and under the Commissioning from the Ranks Plan (CFRP), he transferred to the Communication Electronics Engineering (CELE) Branch. Currently, Maj Richards works in the RCAF’s personnel strategy directorate in Ottawa, as the Acting Personnel Production Section Head and RCAF Officer Occupation Manager.

Major Richards, your military occupation before you released was Infantry, yet when you returned to the CAF you joined the Artillery. Seeing as both are occupations in the combat arms, why the switch?

I was a Reserve Infantry Soldier in the Princess of Wales Own Regiment, in Kingston [Ontario] from 1987 to 1989, and loved it. After I released, I spent some time working on post-secondary education and working in the public sector. My wife and I were married in 1994 and our daughter was born in 1995. We decided that my working a mix of three part-time and seasonal jobs was not going to provide the job stability or sufficient time to spend with my wife and daughter. I went to the recruiting centre in Kingston to start the application process. My experience and familiarity with the combat arms made my initial career choices fairly easy. My first choice was Infantry, followed by Artillery and Armoured. Artillery was the choice available and so I accepted the offer. Looking back, this occupation change could have been an indicator of things to come.

Please tell us a bit about how you came to be a LCIS Technician, and what was it that attracted you to this occupation?

I loved my time in the Artillery. There is a camaraderie in the combat arms that is difficult to find anywhere else; however, family and future was still a big motivating factor for me. At this point in my career I was unsure how long I wanted to stay in the military and was looking for something that would be suited for possible post-military employment. I completed an Artillery Communications course and the systems we were using caught my attention; I wanted to understand how they worked, not just how to use them. Having been interested in electronics for a long time and taking some related courses in college, LCIS seemed like a good fit.

Had the VOT option not been available, would you have stayed in the CAF?

I really don’t know if I would have stayed in the CAF. Around this time, I was considering my options for a career after the military. VOT turned out to be a fantastic opportunity for me. I learned a new trade and it reinvigorated my desire to make the military a career. During my time as a LCIS Tech, I spent most of my time in Satellite Communications and deployed several times to provide Rear Link services, enabling communications back to Canada from the strategic / command level all the way to the individual being able to phone home.

Changing occupation generally means starting a career over again. What was the main driving force behind your decision, not once but three times?

It does seem like starting over, but only to the extent that some of the applied skills, training and immediate work location change. Unlike changing careers on civvy street, in the military the overall work environment doesn’t really change that much. Our co-workers across the CAF share similar values and experience; we don’t have to fit in all over again with a new company or organization with new rules and policies. I would say the driving force behind changing trades was the opportunity to continue to develop professionally, seek new experiences and challenges. The opportunities available in the CAF to make the kind of big career changes available through VOT or other In-Service Selection plans, while staying within the organization, are something you aren’t likely to find anywhere else.

When you applied for the CFRP, what made you switch from a land occupation to an air one?

I had actually been nominated for CFRP to Signals Officer (Sig O) three times before I checked the CELE box instead. And, that came about almost by accident. I was on a bus in Ottawa just after a CFRP Selection and ran into the CELE
**Reminder: The AVN/AVS/Flt Engr Work Analysis Survey is Now Under Way!**

By now you may have been invited to complete the AVN/AVS/Flt Engr Work Analysis Survey that started in mid-January 2021. The aim of the survey is to ensure the work you are currently assigned is captured, and to ensure the formal occupation documents match the requisite experience for selection to Flt Engr. Watch your DWAN inbox for the invitation and submit your responses no later than 28 February 2021. Who will be asked?

**Flight Engineers (Flt Engrs):** All Regular Force Flt Engrs at the rank of Corporal who have successfully achieved Operational Functional Point (OFP) as a Flt Engr and have at least one year working as a post-OFP Flt Engr, as well as all Regular Force Master Corporal (MCpl) and Sergeant Flt Engrs.

**Avionics Systems Technicians (AVS Techs):** All Regular Force AVS Techs at or below the rank of MCpl who have successfully completed AVS Tech Qualification Level 3 (QL3) training and have been performing in the occupation for at least one year.

**Aviation Systems Technicians (AVN Techs):** All Regular Force AVN Techs at or below the rank of MCpl who have successfully completed AVN Tech QL3 training and have been performing in the occupation for at least one year.

**IMPORTANT!**
If you have already completed the previous survey in the Fall of 2019 you will be asked NOT to complete the new survey version to prevent duplicate responses.

---

**Major Mike Richards**  (cont. from previous page)

Career Manager at the time, who also happened to be a former Troop Commander. He told me that an ACISS-Core Sgt who had been selected for CFRP to CELE. This was an option I had been unaware of to that point. So, the following year when I was nominated, I selected CELE instead of Sig O and haven’t looked back.

**In your own opinion, what are the benefits of changing from one occupation to another? Any drawbacks?**

I think there are some big advantages of pursuing trade changes. Both as an individual and for the gaining occupation. It gives members an opportunity to pursue new interests and career options in a familiar environment. The gaining occupation gets someone who is keen and interested to be a part of their piece of the organization, and can bring new insights and points of view that can be beneficial.

When I joined the Regular Force in 1996, I definitely did not envision the path my career has taken. The ability to change occupations through both the VOT process and CFRP have been excellent for me. I have had some fantastic experiences throughout my career and many of them may never have happened if I hadn’t taken all of the opportunities available to pursue my interests.

The big potential drawback, on an individual level, is progression expectations. A change of occupation can slow down your promotion stream. Personally, I’ve found this to be a short-term delay, because if you possess the leadership skills and have the motivation to succeed, you will catch up to where you were relatively quickly. The keys for progression in the CAF don’t change. If you were advancing well in your previous occupation, you most likely will be again.

**What words of advice would you have to those who may be thinking of undertaking a VOT? How should they prepare?**

I think the biggest thing, if you are considering a change, is to look for something that will interest and challenge you. Don’t lock yourself to an element [i.e. Land, Sea or Air]; you might miss a great opportunity. The recruiting page is a great place to get an idea of what occupations suit your goals. Once you think you’ve found the occupation for you, talk to people who are already there. Use the DWAN to access entry standards and job specifications; gather as much extra information as you can. Be prepared to answer questions about your prospective trade during an interview. Talk to a Personnel Selection Officer; they are an excellent resource who can help you situate yourself to best pursue your goals.

---

**Are you considering a change to your CAF career?**

*Your local Personnel Selection Officer is your best resource for information and guidance!*
What We Are Hearing: Concerns About the Way Avionics Tasks Are Changing

Given the way technology is changing so many facets of our everyday life, it should come as no surprise that technology is changing the way some air maintenance tasks are performed. The scope of maintenance on the RCAF’s fleets has changed significantly relative to that of their predecessors and, over time, the role of the Avionics Systems (AVS) Technician has also evolved. This is particularly true for our newer platforms - most recently the recently the CH-148 Cyclone and the CC-295 Kingfisher.

This evolution is evident in a few ways, including the fact that there is no longer a requirement for avionics laboratories for most fleets given that most advanced systems now call for a first- to third-line maintenance program. In most cases, the RCAF doesn’t hold the Intellectual Property rights for the inner workings of systems and thus could not repair them even if it preferred to. In addition, in-depth repair requires additional overhead costs, not the least of which are personnel. Ultimately, it serves minimal benefit to the military to continue to support functions that are provided with greater efficiency by industry. It also affords the RCAF the ability to move additional personnel to the first line to satisfy the chronic establishment deficiencies that units and fleets have identified over time. As a result, the RCAF is focusing more and more on ensuring that non-core, non-deployable functions are delivered externally.

This transition away from in-depth “inside the box” electronics repair is not unique to the RCAF - it’s a reflection of a broader industry trend. Think about your car; its advanced computing technology means no longer can it be repaired by the owner or often-times even the dealership. Similarly, airline industries have advanced to the point where airborne aircraft now can transmit fault codes to ensure the right components are available upon landing, thus ensuring quick turnaround and high availability, the exact same objectives of the RCAF. The RCAF must be reflective of the industrial complex that supports it in order to stay relevant, agile, and affordable. Today’s technicians must adapt and generate the skillsets required of modern technology, hence the training sequence was updated this past year to accommodate those adaptations (see article). Regardless of the way the tasks are now performed, our technicians continue to be a valued and irreplaceable asset to RCAF operations.

We want to hear from you!

PERSpectives is your newsletter and your input is essential to making it relevant and useful.

What would you like to see?

You can submit your comments, questions and suggestions to:
+RCAF PERSpectives - PERSpectives de LARC@C Air Force@Ottawa-Hull

Students at the Canadian Forces School of Aerospace, Technology and Engineering at 16 Wing in Borden, Ontario, are learning the skillsets required of modern technology.

Photo: 16 Wing Imaging Section.