

Would-be soldiers 'attracted to violence:' Study

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OTTAWA — Young Canadians interested in joining the military tend to lack life goals, feel alienated and accept violence to achieve ends, says an internal army study obtained by The Canadian Press.

Some findings in the 80-page report suggest army recruiters should carefully screen the 5,000 additional soldiers they plan to hire over the next five years.

People interested in a career with the Canadian Forces tend to be "lacking in life goals and feel alienated from society and its values," says the document, co-authored by three senior officers.

"They are attracted to violence more than the average member of Canadian society and accept violence as a legitimate means of getting what they want."

Generally, those interested in joining the Forces also tend to be "somewhat timid in the face of change and preferred traditional categories of identity by race, gender, and nationality," says the survey. "As a result, they may resist affirmative action initiatives."

The observations are contained in a draft copy of the study, Canada's Soldiers: Military Ethos and Canadian Values in the 21st Century Army.

The attitudes of people interested in joining the military were extracted from pollster CROP Inc.'s annual survey of Canadians. The research was also based on 60 questions to 1,297 regular soldiers and 440 reservists.

There are about 19,500 active soldiers and 15,000 army reservists in Canada. The Canadian Forces survey's 26 per cent response rate — about 7,300 were distributed — was considered low but acceptable.

The army, expected to take on a greater role in international peacemaking and disaster relief, is likely to get the bulk of the new recruits under new government policy.

While the report suggests attitudes "mellow" with age, it paints a picture of potential recruits who are spoiled, petulant and who "defer to external codes and rules" but look after their own self-interest:

— Those exploring a military career are not so much interested in serving as in "being someone and belonging to something."

— They tend to pursue happiness before duty, give personal life priority over work, and in ethical dilemmas tend to favour personal interests.

— They want to own status symbols and look good, and need to "break out of their isolation and share the collective emotions of a group."

Col. Mike Capstick, a co-author of the report, says not all those who expressed an interest in the military would have signed on, nor would all who signed on have been accepted, survived training or unit integration.

"We know that some of them are released because they're just not suitable for military service," said Capstick.

Some characteristics of potential recruits are similar to those of serving soldiers.

"Survey results suggest that soldiers tend to be traditionalists in regard to gender and minorities," it says. "In comparison to Canadian society, soldiers are less supportive of affirmative action for women and minorities."

"In the hiring of new employees they tend to believe that experience and ability, not quotas, should be the primary considerations."

They tend to support sexual stereotypes and prefer to preserve and maintain their own cultural traditions and customs.

"They also tend to consider national superiority to be important and to see themselves as superior to foreigners," says the report.

"These attitudes and values may, at times, result in conflict with Canadian values as expressed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

But the report also says the military can instill better values in its recruits, bringing them closer to the "centre of mass" of Canadian values.

The report acknowledged it was weighted toward the male view because there are more men than women in the army.

"Females tend to moderate the male values in the army," it says, including "values that might lead to intolerance of people not like themselves."

"Women . . . generally have a more liberal, cosmopolitan outlook; less fixation on traditional forms of group identity and are thus more sensitive to gender and minority issues."

Women are also more open to flexible family arrangements, such as same-sex couples, and shifting gender identities, and are more concerned with equity in the workplace.

"They also value integrity more highly than men as they tend to have a higher regard for the social contract (don't cheat on income tax, don't hire under the table, etc.) and tend to respond more favourably to questions of workplace ethics," it says.