

**RMC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
L'ASSOCIATION DES ANCIEN(NE)S DES CMR**



Responding to the CMC Review: Towards Renewal

What we heard from our members

Alumni Survey on the Issues in the Arbour Report

In the fall of 2023, the RMCAA surveyed alumni to find out what they thought about the issues in the Arbour Report. This survey was sent to almost 7,000 individual members of the RMCAA whose e-mail addresses are on file. Considering bounce-backs and spam filters, the 1,462 responses received from alumni represents an exemplary response rate and is an indication of the current level of alumni engagement. The highest engagement came from classes in the 1960's (193 respondents - 13% of total respondents), 1970's (352 responses- 24%) and 1980's (290 responses - 20%).

Significant majorities of respondents in all cohorts felt that “ the CMCs prepared me to face and overcome challenges,” and that “ the CMCs prepared me for career in the CAF and beyond.” A smaller proportion of the 2010 to 2023 cohort agreed with the latter statement, although even for this group fully two thirds (67%) agreed.

The most striking conclusion to be drawn from the survey results was that alumni broadly believe there is room for improvement in the way CMCs operate. Below are the number of respondents who agree/strongly agree with the listed statements:

Statement	All respondents	Female & non-binary	Graduating Class 2010-2023
There were clear criteria and a fair process for selecting Cadet Wing leaders	27%	18%	16%
Need more after-hours instructor supervision	45%	66%	42%
Instructors at CMCs were good leadership role models	50%	30%	19%
College staff exercised good oversight over the types of punishments that Cadet Wing leaders handed out to other cadets	35%	19%	18%

When asked about mental health services roughly 50% of all alumni either disagreed or were neutral about the following statements:

- I could access mental health services as and when I needed them; and
- Mental health services provided adequate support for the issues I was experiencing.

It is also clear that concerns over discrimination and harassment at the CMCs are significant, especially so among female and non-binary or younger respondents. This is the breakdown of individuals who agree/strongly agree with the listed statements:

Statement	All respondents	Female & non-binary	Graduating Class 2010-2023
I witnessed other cadets experience discriminatory behaviour such as unwanted sexual contact or harassment	45%	73%	67%
Discriminatory behaviour such as sexual misconduct are prevalent issues at the CMCs	32%	53%	56%
The CMCs are taking sufficient steps to address discriminatory behaviour	43%	36%	48%

Despite these opinions, alumni are confident that CMCs can produce quality leaders and be instrumental in creating positive cultural change in the CAF. These were the responses when alumni were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The CMCs are the place where the foundations can be laid for needed cultural changes in the CAF	81%	11%	8%
CMCs are the best place to produce exemplary leaders for the CAF	72%	16%	12%
CMCs should be wound down	7%	5%	88%

To put it simply, the survey found that alumni feel their time at the military colleges got them ready for tough times and jobs in the future. But they also think some things could be better. Clearer processes to pick and supervise Cadet Wing leaders, more instructors watching after class hours, and better controls on how punishments are given out. They also want better help for mental health issues and stronger efforts to stop discrimination and harassment from happening. Even with these issues, most alumni still believe the Canadian Military Colleges train excellent leaders who can lead needed cultural change in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Alumni submissions

In addition to surveying alumni, RMCAA has been encouraging individuals, Classes and Branches to share their feedback, questions and perspectives on the topics of the Arbour Report recommendations and the renewal of the Canadian Military Colleges. Over 200 submissions have been received so far. Some submissions were a sentence or two whereas others were dozens of pages of structured feedback on specific questions (especially those received from Classes or Branches). What follows are some highlights with a few illustrative quotes which have been anonymized.

Those who took the time to send in submission are nearly unanimously of the view that the Canadian Military Colleges serve an essential role as a Canadian leadership institution and must be preserved. Nearly all, however, indicate that significant changes at the CMCs are needed, with a few making the point that getting things right at the CMCs would then help cascade needed changes over the CAF. One of the key points made by most of these submissions is that sexual misconduct at the CMCs must not just be reduced but eradicated.

“Many college graduates go on to successful careers outside of the military once their service time is finished. Doctors, lawyers, politicians – leaders in all walks of life come from the graduating classes of RMC. That is testament to the ongoing benefits to society of good leadership training at the colleges.”

“I have been an active supporter of the CMCs, but not blindly so. My time at CMR/RMC was not my favourite life experience. But I learned not only from the positive elements, but also what to avoid in the negative elements. Changes should be made at the CMCs with lessons learned about the negative elements... Closing the fine institutions of the CMCs with all their potential should not be an option. This is an achievable turn-around.”

“While I did not experience any sexual harassment or assault, I am very proud of the women, and gender non-conforming folks, who came forward to talk about the harm their experienced. I believe them. I am listening and I want RMC to change so that it can develop strong officers for the future who are responsive to those they lead.”

“I have two daughters who have stated their desire to follow in their dad’s footsteps, joining the CAF and attending RMC. It would be most disappointing if their dreams are destroyed by a negative outcome from the external review which closes the colleges. I hope that the review can only bring positive progress and make the colleges a safe and better place for my daughters to attend.”

There are a very small number of dissenters from the broadly held view that the CMCs must be preserved AND that changes are needed. These dissenters are sceptical in diametrically opposed ways. On the one hand, a few doubt that the problems described by the Arbour Report even exist (as they are not something that they were aware of during their own days at the College nor are they something they personally witnessed in their military careers), or are as serious as

described, or are any different than what occurs on civilian campuses. For them, the only response needed is to mount a sturdy and unequivocal defence of the CMCs. On the other hand, a few express a loss of faith and deep disappointment with regard to the CMCs and doubt that the problems can actually be redressed, mentioning that they would not encourage their children or grandchildren to attend a CMC or that they are ashamed to say where they went to school. For them, the recommendation to shut down the CMCs may be the right approach.

On the question of the future of the Cadet Wing, views were a little less unanimous. That said, most of those who made a submission consider that the Cadet Wing still serves an important function in inculcating cadets with practical command experience, and ought, with significant changes, to be preserved.

“If the CAF does not let them lead at RMC, they will be less prepared for their future responsibilities. Can it be better? Yes, it must be, but taking away that learning and growth opportunity (and yes, even making mistakes and being corrected) is unwise.”

The most frequently mentioned problem with the Cadet Wing is that it confers too much unsupervised authority to Cadet over Cadet, allowing for potential abuses of power by young people who do not have much life experience or training in leadership.

“The military pillar is great for professional development, but it's also problematic in that junior leaders are leading junior leaders, and nobody knows how to deal with real issues when they come up. I saw a lot of things get swept under the rug when I was there because the chain of command had so many levels of OCdts, that someone was bound to think that your very serious issues were minor complaints that didn't need to be brought higher. So while OCdts should be in "leadership" positions, there needs to be real leadership mixed in there as well.”

The idea that supervision or oversight of Cadets is insufficient in general came up in many submissions, with proposed solutions of fewer levels of Officer Cadets in the command structure and more “adult supervision,” in the form of greater presence by actual officers.

“When I was at RMC, I mostly learned what kind of leader I did NOT want to be, as opposed to seeing good examples to emulate. Having the NCOs/Officers more closely involved would increase the quality of the leadership.”

“Leaders must not assume that the hierarchal military structure will either identify or cope with all abuse. In the CMCs this means that junior officers at the captain level must have an office and a continual presence in the blocks. Likewise senior officers should at least walk through the blocks from time to time unannounced and speak to individual cadets.”

Indeed, leadership at the CMCs was a strongly recurring theme in alumni submissions. In addition to the aforementioned need to emphasize leadership training (formal and informal) for Cadets, many submissions highlighted the need for more and better leaders at the CMCs. They argue that it is the best and brightest of the Canadian Armed Forces who ought to be brought to the CMCs as instructors, suggesting that a posting there not be seen as a detour in a career but as a part of career progression.

“The culture of any organization is shaped by the worst behaviours the leader will tolerate.”

“Squadron commanders were at RMC primarily for graduate study and their role as coach was secondary and mostly administrative. An alternate recommendation would be to embed fully dedicated military mentors (senior NCOs and Officers) and military subject matter experts for coaching the Cadets that have command responsibility. Learning errors in “the art of command” would be caught early by the coaches and minimize viral outcomes.”

A few made suggestions regarding a potential reconfiguring of the four pillars or refocussing of the CMCs to focus more squarely, as aforementioned, on leadership and military studies, or even to turn the CMCs into institutions conferring graduate degrees, after an undergrad is completed elsewhere.

“Subcontract to Canadian universities, all of the general undergraduate university diploma required of the officer corps, according to the current provisions of the two recruitment plans PFOR and PEDO (direct entry program as an officer, which meet the needs of the FAC, namely, obtaining the officer's certificate and an undergraduate diploma. The vocation of the CMRC therefore becomes to train officers, graduates of universities or PEDOs, on the other three pillars, in particularly that of military training” in English.”

But many more submissions indicated support for the four pillars of a CMC education.

“The four-pillar program at the CMC's is designed to produce outstanding leaders, mentally and physically fit young officers, achieve desired metrics in bilingual training and finally excellent in-class instruction via the CMC Military Leadership and Management faculty. These outcomes cannot and will not be replicated by sending young officers to civilian universities and thereafter away for continuous training post university graduation.”

On behalf of CMC Renewal Team/l'équipe du renouvellement des CMC -
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