

CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES IN ONTARIO FOR MILITARY SPOUSES AND VETERANS

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I. PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training, and Skills Development (referred to as ‘the ministry’) is aware that members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) community, specifically Military Spouses and Veterans, encounter difficulties when searching for and keeping jobs comparable to their skills and experience in the civilian workforce. Military Spouses often face these challenges due to frequent moves between provinces and territories caused by their serving CAF spouse’s postings. Veterans, on the other hand, struggle with transitioning into civilian employment.

The ministry has created this consultation paper to engage with interested parties on this issue. **Our goal is to gain a better understanding of the nature and prevalence of employment-related challenges within Ontario for Military Spouses and Veterans.** This in turn will help the ministry determine the types of action it can take to support better employment outcomes for members of Ontario’s military community.

Addressing these employment challenges is a priority for the ministry. It not only reflects the province’s commitment to supporting those who have served and sacrificed for our country, but also helps Ontario make full use of a skilled and motivated talent pool, especially in the context of the significant labour shortages within the province.

How to Participate

The ministry invites input from individuals or groups with firsthand knowledge or a strong understanding of the employment challenges faced by Military Spouses and Veterans in Ontario.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Members of the military community themselves (e.g., CAF members, Military Spouses, and Veterans)
- Those who work with and support the military community (e.g., Military Family Resource Centres)
- Workforce development partners including employers, employment and training providers, educators, and professional regulatory bodies
- Other key collaborators involved in supporting workforce participation of members of the military community
- Other members of the public

You will find some questions to guide your response in various sections of this paper with the complete set of questions listed in *Appendix A*.

Please submit your responses to the guiding questions through the Regulatory Registry's comment feature found at the bottom of this consultation's posting page or by e-mail to MLITSDConsultation@ontario.ca. You may also mail your written submission to the following address:

Strategic Partnerships and Evaluation Branch
Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
315 Front Street West – 17th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 0B8

Responses must be provided no later than **11:59 pm on December 27, 2023**.

Please review the privacy notice for this consultation process at the end of this consultation paper. If you have any questions regarding this consultation, including how to participate, the collection and/or use of personal information, please e-mail MLITSDConsultation@ontario.ca. Thank you for your participation.

II. INTRODUCTION

Ontario's military community, which encompasses both Military Spouses and Veterans, plays a crucial role in the province. Their dedication and sacrifices for the nation merit the highest level of respect and support. Given Ontario's current labour shortages, it is essential for the province to optimize the labour force's participation to connect skilled talent with employers and enable workers to realize their full potential.

Through this consultation paper, the ministry aims to enhance the employment outcomes for Military Spouses and Veterans in Ontario by focusing on the following objectives:

1. Gathering information about the specific challenges and hurdles they encounter in Ontario as they navigate transitions between employment, often due to relocation between provinces/territories or transitioning to civilian life.
2. Assessing where gaps and obstacles may exist for them within Ontario's comprehensive array of employment-supporting programs and services.
3. Seeking feedback and suggestions on tangible actions that the ministry can undertake to improve employment outcomes for this group.

III. ONTARIO'S MILITARY COMMUNITY

Understanding the challenges faced by Military Spouses and Veterans begins with knowing the military community in Ontario. Over 35 percent of the approximately 100,000 serving Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members (regular and reserve forces) reside in Ontario and the province hosts six major military bases across its vast geographical area.

Although there is limited provincial-level data for the military community in Ontario, the data available from institutions like the Canadian Forces Morale, Welfare Services (CFMWS) and Statistics Canada suggests Ontario may have one of the highest populations of Military Spouses and Veterans in the country. The data also suggests that a considerable proportion of these two groups may be in the core working age population, making it crucial to understand how their workforce opportunities could be best supported by government.

Demographic and Labour Market Profile of Military Spouses

According to data from the CFMWS, there are 15,000 postings annually for Regular Force members across the country and **about 8,000 military family members move to a new province every year with the normal duration of a posting being between 3-5 years** (although postings vary by circumstances). Nevertheless, military families relocate three times more than the average Canadian family.

Of the 40,000 military family members (spouses/partners, children, and other dependents) residing in Ontario, it is estimated that there are 14,500 Military Spouses and nearly 25,000 children.¹

Military Spouses are overwhelmingly female (87 percent), largely between the ages of 30-49 (69%), are highly educated (62% have a postsecondary education), and a sizeable proportion work in a regulated occupation (25%) that requires them to register with the provincial/territorial regulatory body with every move to work in their field.²

Demographic and Labour Market Profile of Veterans

According to the 2021 Census, there were approximately 149,020 Veterans residing in Ontario— over 32 percent of CAF's total veteran population. Almost a third of the

¹ Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services (CFMWS) 2018 survey.

² Ibid.

Canadian Veteran population at the time of the census were in the prime working age group of 25 to 54.³

The average age of a CAF Veteran upon release from service is 40, which suggests a portion of veterans may be looking to join the civilian workforce. However, while approximately 8,000 CAF members are released from military service each year, **only about 50 percent of them (4,000 – 4,500) annually transition** to the civilian labour force.⁴

Although the employment outcome of Veterans is positive and their unemployment rate was on par with that of Canadians in one study, certain sub-populations were more likely to experience challenges. For example, unemployed Veterans tended to be younger at release, female, medically released and self-identify as being from an Indigenous population.⁵

Guiding Questions: Ontario's Military Community

1. Are there other significant demographic trends and characteristics for Military Spouses and Veterans in Ontario not reflected here?
2. How do these demographic and labour market trends impact the employment opportunities and challenges faced by Military Spouses and Veterans in the province?

IV. EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES

The employment challenges experienced by Military Spouses and Veterans in Ontario are multifaceted and do impact their ability to remain and/or fully participate in the workforce, as well as their well-being. For example:

³ Statistics Canada. (2022). [The Daily — On guard for thee: serving in the Canadian Armed Forces \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/28-6014-x/2022001/article/00001-eng.htm)

⁴ Data from Veterans Affairs Canada.

⁵ MacLean, M. B., Keough, J., Poirier, A., McKinnon, K., & Sweet, J. (2019). [Labour market outcomes of Veterans](#). *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 5(1), 58-70.

- Half of the Ontario military families in one study reported that their financial situation worsened after relocating, mostly because of reduced working hours of adult family members and higher living costs.⁶
- Despite having on average good employment outcomes, a higher share of the Veteran population is not in the labour force compared to the Canadian population (23% vs. 18%).⁷

Therefore, it is crucial to understand these challenges and how they prevent or limit the Military Spouses and Veterans from fully participating in the Ontario labour market, and consequently supporting its economic growth.

Employment Challenges Faced by Military Spouses

Frequent Relocations

According to a 2017 study, 70 percent of Military Spouses noted that their careers were adversely affected by their partner's military service, while 51 percent of spouses indicated that they made sacrifices in their employment to support their spouse's military career.⁸

Military families, unlike their non-military counterparts, are more geographically mobile and routinely move to different bases or locations across the country (and in some cases to and from outside of the country). It is likely that this issue may be more pronounced in provinces like Ontario with multiple military bases.

This geographic mobility poses a fundamental challenge to the employment of Military Spouses as it can disrupt their career progression, making it difficult to establish continuity in employment.

Frequent moves require them to adapt to new labour markets that may limit their employment prospects, potentially leading to gaps in their employment history, and hindering their ability to find and maintain consistent employment in their chosen field. Employers may negatively view their gaps in employment history and/or short-term employment (due to relocations) and choose not to hire them.

Research has found that in addition to Military Spouses being less likely to be employed than spouses of police officers, federal public servants, and other civilians, when they

⁶ Ontario Digital Service. (2019). Military Family Hotline One-on-one Interviews.

⁷ MacLean, M. B., Keough, J., Poirier, A., McKinnon, K., & Sweet, J. (2019). [Labour market outcomes of Veterans](#). *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 5(1), 58-70.

⁸ Leigh, S. (2017). Governing "dependents": The Canadian Military Family and Gender, a Policy Analysis. *International Journal* 72 (4), 484-502

were employed, Military Spouses also had a lower income.⁹ Furthermore, CFMWS data shows that over two-thirds of Military Spouses indicated they found it difficult to re-establish their employment when they relocated.

Credential Recognition & Domestic Labour Mobility

Many Military Spouses possess valuable skills and qualifications, but their portability to their new home can be limited. This causes significant delays in their ability to work in their professional field, which may lead to underemployment as they may be forced to work in occupations that may not be on par with their skill and experience level.

Domestic labour mobility within Canada in Ontario is governed by the Canada Free Trade Agreement and several legislation and agreements. It is based on the principle of certificate-to-certificate recognition for regulated occupations.¹⁰

However, despite existing labour mobility provisions, **Military Spouses still encounter credential recognition and licensing barriers when seeking employment in their chosen professions following a move.** According to the CFMWS, 33 percent of Military Spouses surveyed said it was difficult to re-establish their professional certification upon relocation (18 percent said it was extremely difficult). Military families have also noted similar barriers to certificate-to-certificate recognition in Ontario.¹¹

The primary challenges Military Spouses have identified pertaining to labour mobility include but may not be limited to the following:

- Registration timelines and delays by regulators in both their previous and current jurisdiction as well as inconsistent practice requirements and re-certification/credential recognition processes.¹²
- Costs of repeated registrations, particularly given that they have to frequently relocate.
- Lack of a centralized source of information on the certification processes.
- Limited knowledge and awareness of existing labour mobility supports and services in various provinces and territories such as Labour Mobility Coordinators.

⁹ Dunn, J., Urban, S., & Wang, Z. (2011). [Spousal Employment and Income in the Canadian Forces](#). Res Militaris, 2(1), 1-14.

¹⁰ Provinces and territories may have exceptions to labour mobility for certain occupations and instances where a difference in qualification or scope of practice of the occupation leads to significant gaps in knowledge, skills, or competencies.

¹¹ Ontario Digital Service. (2019). Military Family Hotline One-on-one Interviews.

¹² Ibid.

Access to Wraparound Supports

Access to affordable and flexible childcare services is important to Military Spouses who often manage family responsibilities during deployments or postings on top of irregular schedules and unexpected demands that may be typical of military life. However, depending on where the family has been posted to, **childcare may not be readily available, affordable, or flexible to meet their needs, which in turn, limits their ability to fully participate in the workforce.**

Additionally, career networking opportunities are also constrained for Military Spouses, as they may not have the chance to establish long-term connections in any one location. For example, without adequate supports, **Military Spouses may lack access to networks that can assist with job hunting and career advancement.** This can be especially problematic in provinces like Ontario, where networking plays a crucial role in securing employment opportunities.

Employment Challenges for Military Veterans

Transition to Civilian Employment

Transitioning from military service to civilian employment presents a distinct set of challenges for Veterans in Ontario and across Canada. For example:

- One study found that 39 percent of Regular Force Veterans who left the CAF between 1998 and 2018 reported their transition to post-service life as being difficult or very difficult.¹³
- Another study found that 27 percent of Veterans had a difficult adjustment to civilian life following release from military service.
- Even when employed, over 20 percent still reported difficulties adjusting to civilian life.¹⁴

A prominent challenge Veterans face transitioning to civilian employment is translating their military skills and experiences into the civilian job market. While they possess unique and valuable skills, these may not always have direct equivalents in civilian roles. One study found that approximately 1 in 3 Veterans come from occupations that have no comparable civilian occupation.¹⁵

¹³ Statistics Canada. (2020). [Life After Survey, 2019](#).

¹⁴ MacLean, M. B., Keough, J., Poirier, A., McKinnon, K., & Sweet, J. (2019). [Labour market outcomes of Veterans](#). *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 5(1), 58-70.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Additionally, Veterans may struggle to communicate their skillset and the value of their experience to employers in non-military work environments. They may require supports tailoring their resume to the civilian workforce in addition to other employment services supports such as getting familiar with civilian interview processes. Employers may not fully comprehend the value of Veterans' military experiences, potentially leading to misconceptions about their ability to integrate into civilian workplaces and unintentionally lead to bias in the hiring process.

Veterans may also require additional education or training to bridge the gap between their military experiences and civilian job requirements. Access to relevant education and retraining opportunities, particularly ones that are tailored to their unique experience and skillsets and are designed to rapidly get them ready for the civilian workforce may be crucial to support their transition.

Research also shows that some Veterans struggle with job satisfaction as changing employers was common for them.¹⁶ This lack of employment continuity can lead to instability and uncertainty in their post-military career.

Access to Wraparound Supports

Some Veterans may be dealing with mental and/or physical health issues due to their military service which can create additional barriers to employment. In one study, **Veterans were more likely than other Canadians to experience health-related activity limitations at work (33% vs. 13%).**¹⁷

These added challenges can affect their ability to maintain stable employment, perform consistently, and transition to a civilian work environment, if not appropriately supported. Employers may also lack the awareness, training, and resources necessary to properly support these Veterans.

Comprehensive wraparound support that includes access to life stabilization, medical, mental health, rehabilitation and vocational training may be essential to support their employability.

¹⁶ MacLean M.B., Til, L.V., Pinard, D., & Poirier, Al. (2019). [Examining the incomes of veterans using tax data: Now and in the future](#). Statistics Canada Income Research Paper Series.

¹⁷ MacLean, M. B., Keough, J., Poirier, A., McKinnon, K., & Sweet, J. (2019). [Labour market outcomes of Veterans](#). Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health, 5(1), 58-70.

Guiding Questions: Employment Challenges

3. Are there additional challenges faced by Military Spouses relocating to Ontario and Veterans transitioning to civilian employment in the province?
4. How do these challenges affect the overall workforce participation and well-being of Military Spouses and Veterans?
5. What employment and employability challenges do Military Spouses and Veterans from equity-deserving groups face, and what targeted supports might be necessary for equitable opportunities and outcomes?

V. EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS IN ONTARIO

Ontario has a strong history of commitment to supporting its military community. Although Ontario does not have an employment and training program dedicated specifically for members of the military community, it does have various programs and services that address their employment needs.

Building a Skilled Workforce

Through Employment Ontario (a comprehensive suite of over 30 programs and services delivered by government and third-party organizations), **Ontario assists everyone from employers seeking skilled workers, unemployed individuals seeking support to attach to the labour market, employed workers seeking skills upgrades, to individuals in need of literacy, essential skills, and academic upgrading.**

Ontario's Employment Services and Integrated Employment Services offer a range of resources, supports, and services to respond to the career and employment needs of individuals including members of the military community. They offer customized supports that guide individuals on a path to find sustainable employment, including the skills training required to achieve that goal.

Programs like the Skills Development Fund Training Stream fund projects geared specifically to members of the military community, helping them to train for and secure jobs in **high-demand sectors such as the skilled trades and cybersecurity. Better Jobs Ontario** helps individuals, including members of the military community, get trained for in-demand occupations while covering all or a portion of the costs for receiving this training.

Supporting the Mobility of Workers

To centralize essential supports and resources for military families relocating to the province, Ontario has created a dedicated online resource hub. It includes a **dedicated hotline for military families** (1-888-333-8545 or 416-850-0320) that gives them easy access to resources that address their top issues.¹⁸

Ontario introduced **registration time limits for regulated professions and compulsory trades** governed under the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006* and *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* that could benefit members of the military community relocating to Ontario. These changes ensure that certified workers from other provinces and territories receive a registration decision within mandated service standard timelines.

For Military Spouses and Veterans in the skilled trades, the ministry Skills Trade Ontario offers **Trade Equivalency Assessment (TEA)** for experienced tradespeople who have not completed an Ontario apprenticeship. The TEA process recognizes CAF trade qualifications and allows individuals from certain military trades to undergo a free and streamlined assessment process that omits the need to provide detailed evidence of on-the-job experience, trade skills or references, and allows them to challenge the certifying exam to obtain a Certificate of Qualification.¹⁹

Additionally, since 2020, Ontario has supported a streamlined employment pathway for Veterans into the Ontario Public Service by giving them access to OPS employment opportunities through a Veterans' job alert subscription service.

Guiding Questions: Employment Supports in Ontario

6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of current employment supports for Military Spouses and Veterans in Ontario?
7. Are there specific areas where additional or improved services are needed to better support Military Spouses and Veterans?
8. How can the ministry, military community, business community, educators and employment and training organizations work together to support better employment outcomes for Military Spouses and Veterans in Ontario?
9. Are there examples of successful models or practices in other provinces or countries that have effectively supported the employment of Military Spouses and Veterans?

¹⁸ See [Military families: services and support resource hub](#) for more information.

¹⁹ See Skilled Trades Ontario's [Trade Equivalency Assessments](#) for more information.

VI. CONCLUSION

This consultation paper has explored the complex and unique employment challenges faced by Military Spouses and Veterans. It has sought to highlight the various components of this issue, from the demographics of the military community in Ontario to the challenges they encounter in the pursuit of stable and meaningful employment as well as existing workforce development supports that exist for them in the province.

The ministry recognizes that Military Spouses and Veterans experience employment difficulties and is committed to addressing these challenges within Ontario. This process begins with better understanding these challenges as they exist in Ontario, which is why feedback from stakeholders such as yourself is vitally important.

Now, the ministry is looking for your feedback. By engaging in this consultation, you are contributing to the creation of a more inclusive, supportive, and prosperous workforce for all Ontarians and in ensuring that the unique needs and concerns of Military Spouses and Veterans are comprehensively considered.

Together, we can build a brighter and more inclusive future for all members of the military community in Ontario.

VII. PRIVACY NOTICE TO CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

Submissions and comments provided to the ministry are part of a public consultation process that is intended to enhance the ministry's understanding of the nature and prevalence of employment-related challenges for military spouses and veterans in Ontario. This process may involve the ministry publishing or posting your submissions, comments or summaries of them to the internet. In addition, the ministry may also disclose your submissions, comments or summaries of them, to other parties during and after the consultation period.

Therefore, you should not include the names of other parties (such as the names of employers, employees, friends, family members, etc.) or any other information by which other parties could be identified in your submission.

Further, if you, as an individual, do not want your identity to be made public, you should not include your name or any other information by which you could be identified in the main body of the submission.

If you do provide any information which could disclose your identity in the body of the submission, this information may be released with published material or made available

to the public. However, your name and contact information provided outside of the body of the submission (such as that which may be found in a cover letter, on the outside of an envelope, or in the header or signature of an email) will not be disclosed by the ministry unless required by law.

If you provide a submission or comments on behalf of an organization, you will be considered a representative of that organization and your identity in your professional capacity as the organization's representative may be disclosed.

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development is authorized to collect and use personal information for the purpose of this public consultation in compliance with subsections 15(3.1) and 15(8) of the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act* and clause 41(1)(b) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA). The ministry is authorized to disclose personal information in compliance with clause 42(1)(c) of the FIPPA.

If you have any questions regarding the collection or use of personal information because of this consultation, you may contact email MLITSDConsultation@ontario.ca or contact:

Manager, Partnerships Unit
Strategic Partnerships and Evaluation Branch
315 Front Street West, 17th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 0B8

VIII. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Guiding Questions

1. Are there other significant demographic trends and characteristics for Military Spouses and Veterans in Ontario not reflected here?
2. How do these demographic and labour market trends impact the employment opportunities and challenges faced by Military Spouses and Veterans in the province?
3. Are there additional challenges faced by Military Spouses relocating to Ontario and Veterans transitioning to civilian employment in the province?
4. How do these challenges affect the overall workforce participation and well-being of Military Spouses and Veterans?
5. What employment and employability challenges do Military Spouses and Veterans from equity-deserving groups face, and what targeted supports might be necessary for equitable opportunities and outcomes?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of current employment supports for Military Spouses and Veterans in Ontario?
7. Are there specific areas where additional or improved services are needed to better support Military Spouses and Veterans?
8. How can the ministry, military community, business community, educators and employment and training organizations work together to support better employment outcomes for Military Spouses and Veterans in Ontario?
9. Are there examples of successful models or practices in other provinces or countries that have effectively supported the employment of Military Spouses and Veterans?

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

Canadian Armed Forces Regular Force Member— a Regular Force member is employed full-time in the Canadian Armed Forces and make up the bulk of personnel employed domestically and abroad on operations. A Regular Force Member is posted to bases and wings across the country, depending on their trade, career progression, and environment (sea/land/air/special operations).

Canadian Armed Forces Reserve Force Member— a Reserve Force member is employed part-time in the Canadian Armed Forces. This member typically serves part time at a designated unit in their community, often maintaining his/her civilian job or enrolment in school. A Reserve Force member does not receive military postings and is not required to do a military move, although he/she can volunteer to move to another base.

Compulsory Trades— In Ontario, there are 23 compulsory skilled trades that only apprentices, and licensed journeypersons are allowed to work in. Examples include plumber, steamfitter, and hairstylist. A [full list](#) can be found on the Skilled Trades Ontario website. To work in the compulsory trade, you must hold one of the following: a valid Certificate of Qualification, a provisional Certificate of Qualification, or a Registered Training Agreement.

Domestic Labour Mobility— the movement of workers in regulated occupations such as doctors, teachers, and welders across provincial and territorial boundaries. Ontario's labour mobility framework is governed by the Canada Free Trade Agreement (Chapter 7), *Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009*, *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* and the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006*. There are also other related national and Ontario-specific initiatives and agreements that assist with the certification of workers and movement of apprentices across provinces and territories such as the Red Seal Program and Apprentice Mobility Protocol.

Labour Mobility Coordinator— support the implementation and ongoing adherence to the Labour Mobility provisions under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) within their jurisdiction. Each province and territory has a Labour Mobility Coordinator.

Military Spouse— an individual who is married to or in a committed relationship with a member of the Canadian Armed Forces and often faces unique challenges related to frequent relocations and other aspects of military life.

Regulated Occupation— an occupation that is controlled by provincial or territorial and sometimes federal law. The provinces or territories may designate a professional or regulatory body to govern the occupation. The professional or regulatory body has the

authority to set entry requirements and standards of practice that lead to a certification or licensure.

Veteran— a person who has previously served in the Canadian Armed Forces and has been honorably discharged, having completed their active duty or reserve service.