

# National Defence Advertising Pre-Testing 2022 – Awareness Campaign

## Department of National Defence

Executive Summary

July 7, 2022

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This public opinion research report presents the results of eight online focus groups conducted by Quorus Consulting Group on behalf of the Department of National Defence. The sessions were from March 9<sup>th</sup> to March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 with participants from two segments of the general population: Job Seekers 18 to 24 years old, and Job Changers 25 to 34 years old. One online focus group with each of these segments was held with participants located in the following cities and surrounding areas: Toronto, Moncton, and Montreal (French). One session with each segment was also held with participants from the Prairies (Manitoba/Saskatchewan/Alberta).

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Mise à l'essai du concept publicitaire 2022 de la Défense nationale – Campagne de sensibilisation

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Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Nadeau", is centered within a rectangular area that has a light gray, dotted background.

April 15, 2022  
Rick Nadeau, President  
Quorus Consulting Group Inc.

## Executive summary

### Background and research objectives

One of the advertising campaigns the Department of National Defence (DND) oversees is the Canadian Armed Forces recruitment (awareness) campaign, which is being developed to assist the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in enrolling Regular Force (full-time) and Reserve Force (part-time) members to fulfill the Strategic Intake Plan of the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group (CFRG).

The awareness campaign is expected to launch in March 2023, and will include television, radio, digital, social tactics and out-of-home tactics. The key objective of this campaign is to raise a greater level of awareness among Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34 about CAF employment opportunities, how the CAF is an employer of choice, highlighting training and travel opportunities, and how a career in the CAF can take various forms and fit various lifestyles, while addressing key barriers. Moreover, promoting the challenge, purpose, empowerment, fulfillment, and mastery involved in CAF careers, while addressing barriers related to freedom and flexibility.

DND commissioned Quorus to pre-test campaign creatives to explore how the primary target audience (Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34 years of age) responded to the new creatives for the campaign.

### Methodology

This report is based on eight online focus groups that Quorus completed between March 9 and March 15, 2022. Focus groups were composed of men and women 18 to 24 years old (“Job seekers”), and with men and women 25 to 34 years old (“Job changers”). One online focus group with each of these segments was held with participants located in the following cities and surrounding areas: Toronto, Moncton, and Montreal (French). One session with each segment was also held with participants from the Prairies (Manitoba/Saskatchewan/Alberta). Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes. All participants were informed the research was for the Government of Canada and each received \$100 for participating. A total of 56 individuals participated in this study.

## Research results

Three storyboard video concepts were explored with participants, namely:

- Concept A – “Your time is now,” featuring characters engaging in a mundane routine riding the bus or participating in a work meeting as the screen shifts to show the characters participating in action-based duties in the Canadian Armed Forces;
- Concept B – “A career like no other,” featuring the variety of activities that CAF employees engage in using a fast-paced split screen effect;
- Concept C – “This is for you,” featuring characters in different CAF jobs including firefighting, with a visual effect of the CAF uniforms “growing” onto the characters.

Overall, each concept featured particular strengths and weaknesses resulting in each concept receiving fairly equal “moderate appeal” ratings overall and receiving a nearly identical number of final votes. Many participants felt there would be an advantage to combining a few of the elements of two or all three of the concepts to create the strongest concept.

### Reactions to concept A – “Your time is now”

Concept A received moderate to good scores overall and was equally appealing to men and women and to each of the two targeted segments although it did appeal slightly more to the youngest participants.

Those who **liked** this concept highlighted the following:

- This concept performed very well from a visual effect perspective (e.g., how the person transitions from holding the bar in the subway to holding the bar in the safety helicopter) and many felt it was the concept that had the best visual effect.
- This concept connected very well with individuals who feel they are also in mundane or routine types of jobs and who are looking to do more.
- This concept also connected well with individuals who have transferrable skills, such as those with skills in mechanics.
- The concept’s reference to adventure (visually and through the voice over), which was relatively more appealing to the youngest focus group participants.

Those who **liked** this concept **less** highlighted the following:

- The concept lacked substance and balance and came across as “just another recruitment advertisement” that only showcases the exciting aspects of life in the armed forces.
- Those who felt that the concept was intended to target individuals who have transferrable skills felt the ad only featured one character living the transition to military life: the mechanic. They felt that all three characters should have featured individuals transitioning from everyday use of basic skills to using those skills in a different manner in the armed forces.
- A few did not feel the woman knocking over her glass of water (or milk) was a credible transition to life in the armed forces.
- Some also felt that the ad was suggesting that if you are not in the armed forces, your everyday life is not being lived to its full potential, something to which some took offense.
- The ad did not appeal to individuals who are satisfied with their current job and it did not appeal to individuals who did not feel they had transferrable skills to the armed forces. To this end, some suggested that the ad should feature a broader range of career options in the armed forces or at DND, ranging from IT, to administrative and medical.

Most felt the ad did target everyday Canadians, but especially those who are dissatisfied with their current job. A few felt it targeted “middle class” Canadians who take public transportation and who are having trouble finding a job that makes them happy, something which a good number of participants could relate to.

To most, the main message focused on considering the armed forces as a way to break the mundane and the routine of their everyday lives and stepping out of their comfort zones.

The tagline received tepid support. Most participants did not consider it inspiring, catchy or meaningful.

#### Reactions to concept B – A career like no other”

Concept B received moderate to good scores overall and was equally appealing to men and women. Job Seekers were more likely to consider this concept appealing than Job Changers.

Those who **liked** this concept highlighted the following:

- One of the most appealing features of this concept was how much it showed about life in the armed forces. Participants liked that it did not just showcase adventure, but also a full “day in the life”, including training, time in the classroom, eating in the mess hall, etc. Participants felt this gave a more complete picture of life in the armed forces and this was appreciated. It made one of the better arguments that this is “a career like no other”.
- Participants also felt that the concept emphasized work-life balance, which is something many participants seek in a career. Some also felt the ad dispelled myths that life in the armed forces meant constantly being separated from your home and family.
  - It is possible, that some participants mistook the BBQ and the basketball scenes as “life at home” with their family rather than seeing that the main characters were spending some leisure time with fellow members of the armed forces.
- Many liked the ethnic diversity featured in the ad as well as the strong presence of women.

Those who **liked** this concept **less** highlighted the following:

- The concept’s most noteworthy weakness was its creative element, which consisted of a series of split screens for most of the ad. Participants felt that the screens were transitioning too quickly and that this made it difficult for them to pay attention and understand what the ad was trying to tell them. Many were in a better position to fully appreciate the entire ad once the static images were up on their screen. In the end, participants felt that the ad should stay focused on one character throughout the entire ad and showcase what they go through using full screens rather than try to combine the lives of multiple characters using split screens. If split screens are to be used, it was felt that the transitions need to be slowed down.
- Some of the younger participants felt the ad was targeting older Canadians since the ad featured someone leaving their house (something which few of them in their age group owned) and someone driving their car to work (whereas many in their age group take public transportation).

Many felt the ad did target more mature young Canadians who have a home life and for whom work-life balance is more important.

To most, the main message focused on showcasing that life in the armed forces is multi-faceted and that you can successfully balance work and home life.

The tagline was seen by many as effective and appropriate given the concept's main message although when presented with alternate options, most participants selected another slogan. More specifically, "More than you imagine" surfaced as the most popular option (especially among Job Seekers), followed by "Be part of something more" (especially among Job Changers). Job seekers were also slightly more likely to be drawn to "Experience more."

#### Reactions to concept C – "This is for you"

Concept C received moderate to good scores overall and was more appealing to women and to Job Changers.

Those who **liked** this concept highlighted the following:

- The concept was seen as inspiring and thoughtful and it focused on core values rather than on adventure.
- Some especially liked that the ad features individuals who are helping others, something which they felt was more important to highlight rather than showing combat scenes or life on the front.
- A few also appreciated that the ad showed a range of possible career paths.
- The creative element (which focused on uniforms "growing" on the characters) was appealing to most.
- Many liked the ethnic diversity featured in the ad as well as the strong presence of women.
- The repeated use of the word "you", including in the slogan, made some feel like the ad was more personal and directed to them rather than just a general all-call to anyone interested in the armed forces.

Those who **liked** this concept **less** highlighted the following:



- The creative element was a bit lost on a few but, if well done, it could have the potential to be very interesting.
- Many felt that the ad was suggesting that those who want to join the forces need to be natural leaders and already be doing “great things”, which can then be carried over into their careers in the armed forces. These participants did not feel like they stood out in any particular way – that they were just “normal” Canadians – and that this in some way discouraged them from considering a life in the armed forces.
- Although the concept did show some variety, many participants could not connect with any of the characters – in other words, they are not firefighters, they don’t save people with a boat, they are not athletes, and they are not academics.
- A few felt the voice over did not do justice to the characters featured in the concept. More specifically, participants felt the characters are already doing something great and that by suggesting that they should be “part of something bigger”, the voice over was downplaying what they were already achieving.
- Some felt the ad was too “slow” and lacked a clear message. This tended to come from participants who were more interested in adventure and excitement.

Many felt the ad targeted a range of age groups, which included themselves. That said, the focus on natural-born leaders compelled some to feel like they did not fit the mold of the target audience. Some of the younger participants connected with the first character who appears to be a student with a backpack. Some of the recent graduates also connected with the last character who is in a graduation cap and gown.

To most, the main message focused on showcasing how a life in the armed forces is a natural fit for someone with natural leadership skills.

The featured slogan (This is for you) was moderately appealing. For those who connected well with the concept, the slogan worked quite well but those who did not see themselves as “leaders” felt the slogan was not accurate by saying that the armed forces is for them.

## Final vote

Ultimately, all three concepts attracted their fair share of “final votes,” with Concept B (A career like no other) capturing slightly more final votes, noting support if the pace of the ad can be slowed down and using fewer split screens.

- Preferences for each concept were very similar between men and women.
- Whereas Concept A was just as likely to be appealing to Job Seekers and Job Changers, preferences for the other two concepts were quite different between the two target audiences. More specifically, Job Seekers were much more likely to select Concept B (A career like no other) whereas Job Changers were much more likely to prefer Concept C (This is for you).

Many would like to see some of the visual effects from Concept A carried over into their preferred concept. Similarly, there was some interest in combining the creative element from Concept A, with the range of experiences featured in Concept B, and the leadership values conveyed through Concept C.

Ultimately, some participants felt the concepts did hit the mark in terms of talking about or referring to what they would personally look for in a career or an employer. The theme most likely to be mentioned was work-life balance, as highlighted through Concept B.

## What participants look for in a career

Some participants felt the concepts did hit the mark in terms of talking about or referring to what they would personally look for in a career or an employer. The theme most likely to be mentioned across both Job Seekers and Job Changers was work-life balance, as highlighted through Concept B. Some felt that Concept B hit the mark when it came to demonstrating community and relationship building which they consider important (particularly the Job Seekers).

Some participants shared how Concept A resonated with their desire for excitement in a career rather than continuing in a mundane routine. They felt this ad did a good job at showing how the skills they already have could be further developed through the armed forces. A few also expressed interest in developing their leadership skills as well as the idea of helping others and thus felt that Concept C captured these elements.

## Preferred advertising channels

In terms of where DND should advertise, nearly every participant agreed that social media was where they would be most likely to see this type of advertising. The most common channels included YouTube, Facebook (particularly among Job Changers), Instagram, and TikTok. A few mentioned LinkedIn. There were some mentions of live television, especially among male Job Changers who specified that they would likely see this type of ad while watching live sports events.

### Qualitative research disclaimer

Qualitative research seeks to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively projectable measures. The purpose is not to generate “statistics” but to hear the full range of opinions on a topic, understand the language participants use, gauge degrees of passion and engagement and to leverage the power of the group to inspire ideas. Participants are encouraged to voice their opinions, irrespective of whether or not that view is shared by others.

Due to the sample size, the special recruitment methods used, and the study objectives themselves, it is clearly understood that the work under discussion is exploratory in nature. The findings are not, nor were they intended to be, projectable to a larger population.

Specifically, it is inappropriate to suggest or to infer that few (or many) real world users would behave in one way simply because few (or many) participants behaved in this way during the sessions. This kind of projection is strictly the prerogative of quantitative research.

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