The Garrison Community Council
London and Region



June - September 2026

Building closer connections between Canadians and members of our Military Community



From the desk of the President

Strategic Partnership Announcement

Congratulations to General Dynamics Land Systems–Canada on its new strategic partnership with the Government of Canada. GDLS–Canada has received an award of nearly $2 billion to build an additional 190 Armoured Combat Support Vehicles for Canada and 35 additional vehicles for Ukraine.

This procurement is good news for GDLS–Canada, the Canadian military, and London and the surrounding region.

Members may recall the strong presentation GDLS Canada delivered at a recent GCC meeting, which provided helpful context for this announcement.

Meeting Schedule Updates

Our regular GCC meeting schedule has changed because we must work with the available times at The Grove at the Western Fair District. Please watch for GCC announcements with the meeting date, time, location, and Zoom details.

Each member is encouraged to make every effort to attend GCC meetings, either in person or by Zoom.

Membership and Guest Invitations

Like many volunteer organizations, the GCC is working to strengthen its membership. Please consider inviting a relative, neighbour, or casual acquaintance to attend a meeting with you as your guest.

Tom Dean
President GCC

Canada Partners with GDLS-Canada to Build 190 Additional ACSVs for $2 Billion



In a more dangerous and divided world, Canada is taking full responsibility for our own defence. To that end, Canada's new government is making generational investments in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) – reaching NATO's 2% defence spending target for the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, transforming defence procurement, and securing more than 20 defence and security partnerships in a single year.

Building on this momentum, the Prime Minister, Mark Carney, announced a new strategic partnership with General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada (GDLS-Canada). Through this partnership, the government will invest nearly $2 billion over four years to build and deliver 190 additional Armoured Combat Support Vehicles (ACSVs). This will expand Canada's fleet from 360 to 550 vehicles, giving our troops the equipment they need to protect Canadians and support our allies.

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Canada Partners with GDLS-Canada to Build 190 Additional ACSVs

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The new ACSVs will keep soldiers protected, mobile, and mission-ready in the most demanding environments. They combine advanced armour to protect against mines, improvised explosive devices, and enemy fire, with the mobility to keep pace with front-line forces. The additional 190 ACSVs announced today will be utilised in training exercises at CAF bases across the country.

Every vehicle will be designed by Canadian engineers, built with Canadian materials, and assembled by Canadian workers at the GDLS-Canada factory in London, Ontario. As a result, this partnership is expected to create or sustain more than 6,000 high-paying jobs across Canada every year over the next eight years. The work carried out at GDLS-Canada draws on more than 600 Canadian suppliers, in over 100 communities across the country. From the steelworkers at InterPro in Regina who produce the steel used in the armoured hulls, to the engineers at Thales Canada in Saint-Laurent who design the thermal imaging systems, to the technicians at IMP Aerospace & Defence in Enfield who build specialised components, this contract will strengthen our sovereign supply chain and generate lasting benefits to workers and communities across the country.

GDLS-Canada is Canada's first Strategic Partner under the Defence Industrial Strategy's Strategic Partnership Framework. Through this framework, we are creating a pathway for Canadian companies to work more closely with the government to build the sovereign capabilities – the armoured vehicles, the drones, and the icebreakers – our Armed Forces need.



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2026 GCC Executive

President	Tom Dean
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VP Special Projects	Eric Thomson
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Connections Editors

Kevin Patterson - VP Communications
Tom Dean - President and Editorial Consultant
On site photos: Eric Thomson
Screenshots: Gary Nash

The Garrison Community Council
London and Region

GCC's Mission to build a greater understanding, support and appreciation of Canada's military.

Our three fundamental tenets are
Support, Assist and Connect.

Canada Partners with GDLS-Canada to Build 190 Additional ACSVs

Continued from Page 2

Companies selected as Strategic Partners commit to invest in Canadian research and development, grow domestic supply chains, and hire a Canadian workforce.

In return, the federal government will act as an anchor customer – accelerating approvals and opening doors to new export markets.

Canada's government is making the generational investments necessary to rebuild and rearm the CAF. In doing so, we are ensuring these investments strengthen our sovereign supply chains and generate real, lasting benefits for Canadian workers and their communities.

> *"In a more dangerous and divided world, Canada's government is ensuring the women and men of our Armed Forces get what they need, when they need it. Through this new partnership, GDLS-Canada will design, build, deliver, and sustain the next generation of armoured combat vehicles here in Canada. This partnership gives Canadian industry the confidence to invest, innovate, and grow, keeping skilled jobs and hard-won expertise here at home. That is how we build Canada strong."*
>
> *The Rt. Hon. Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada*

> *"Strategic partnerships with Canadian industry are fundamental to ensuring the Canadian Armed Forces have the capabilities they need to defend Canada today and into the future. By working with trusted Canadian partners, we are strengthening our defence industrial base, supporting highly skilled jobs, and advancing innovation that enhances Canada's security and sovereignty. General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada has been a valued partner in supporting the Canadian Armed Forces, and we look forward to building on that partnership to deliver the next generation of military capabilities while creating lasting economic benefits for Canadians."*
>
> *The Hon. David J. McGuinty, Minister of National Defence*

> *"As we deliver on our commitment to rearm, rebuild, and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces, the Defence Industrial Strategy and the Strategic Partnership Framework are helping Canadian industry grow, innovate, and create good jobs. As a global leader in armoured combat vehicles, Canada is well positioned to capitalise on rising demand, and this investment will help drive innovation, attract investment, and create high-quality jobs that support a stronger and more resilient Canadian economy."*
>
> *The Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions*

> *"Canada's new government is taking decisive action to rebuild our defence capacity and strengthen our sovereignty. Through this strategic partnership with General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada, we are putting Canadian workers, Canadian expertise, and Canadian industry at the centre of our defence investments. By designing, building, and sustaining armoured combat vehicles here at home, we are creating skilled jobs, securing critical supply chains, and ensuring our Armed Forces have the equipment they need to protect Canadians."*
>
> *The Hon. Joël Lightbound, Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement and Quebec Lieutenant*

> *"Canada's new approach to defence procurement is delivering capabilities to the Canadian Armed Forces faster while strengthening our domestic defence industry. The armoured combat vehicle strategic partnership is an investment in Canada's security and economy. Through the Defence Investment Agency and the Defence Industrial Strategy, we are building and enduring partnerships with Canadian companies that expand industrial capacity, drive innovation, and ensure every investment strengthens both our national security and our economy."*
>
> *The Hon. Stephen Fuhr, Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)*

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Canada Partners with GDLS-Canada to Build 190 Additional ACSVs for $2 Billion

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ADDITIONAL INFO

- Headquartered in London, Ontario, GDLS-Canada employs more than 1,700 workers who design, manufacture, and support made-in-Canada ACSVs. Over nearly 50 years, the company has delivered over 2,000 vehicles to the CAF, and more than 9,000 vehicles to Canada's allies and partners.
- This new strategic partnership with GDLS-Canada creates a long-term framework for Canada's Armoured Combat Vehicle-Wheeled program, supporting the delivery, sustainment, modernisation, and future evolution of the fleet. By creating a more collaborative approach between government and industry, it will streamline procurement, reduce risk, accelerate delivery, and ensure Canada can respond more quickly to evolving operational requirements.
- ACSVs are currently deployed with the Canadian-led NATO Multinational Brigade in Latvia under Operation REASSURANCE, and Canada has donated 89 of these vehicles to Ukraine, with an additional 35 committed at the 2026 NATO Summit, as part of more than $8.5 billion in Canadian military assistance to Ukraine.

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GCC June General Meeting



The Garrison Community Council June general meeting was held on June 10th. Our speaker was Lieutenant Commander Martinus (Martijn L.) Van Essen, a Dutch historian and author who co-authored a definitive historical reconstruction of Operation Cannonshot. Lieutenant Commander Van Essen joined us by ZOOM from the Netherlands. honours the sacrifices made during the liberation.

Operation Cannonshot was an offensive launched by the Canadian Army in April 1945 that liberated Apeldoorn and region. Many local Army units participated in this offensive including the 1st Hussars and the Royal Canadian Regiment amongst others.

Martijn Van Essen grew up in the Apeldoorn region of the Netherlands where his family has lived for multiple generations, including during the Second World War.

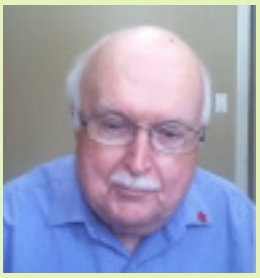
The Operation Cannonshot Organization based in the Apeldoorn region of the Netherlands remembers and honours the sacrifices made during the liberation.

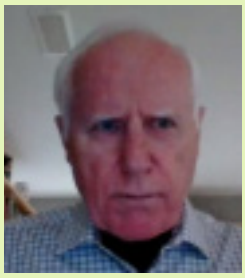
This organization is composed of local people from all walks of life.

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GCC June General Meeting

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The motto of the organization is “Building bridges between the past and future”. During the anniversary of the liberation, Op Cannonshot hosts reenactments, recognition of past events with primary school engagement, and hosts educational tours and activities.

Lieutenant Commander Martijn Van Essen is a serving staff officer in a headquarters in the Maritime Operations cell. He and his family have had an ongoing interest in the history of the Netherlands. He has coauthored an excellent book called “Operation Cannonshot”, presently only available in the Dutch language.





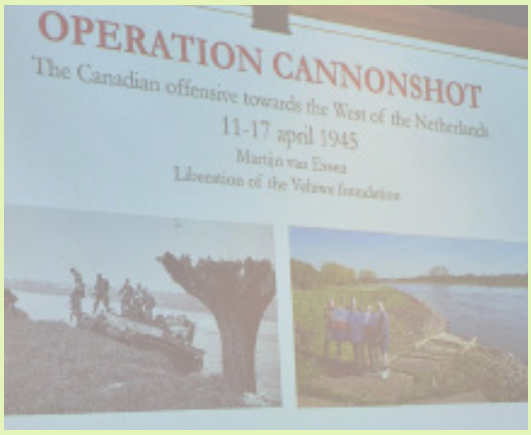


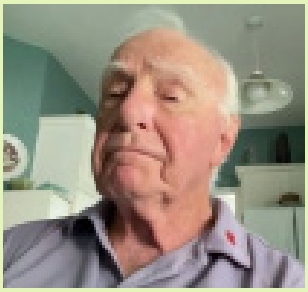


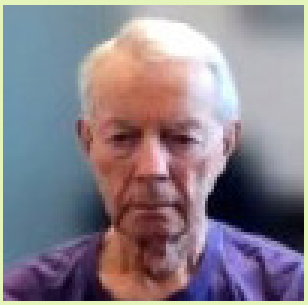


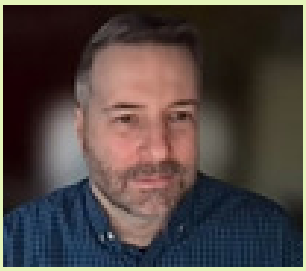














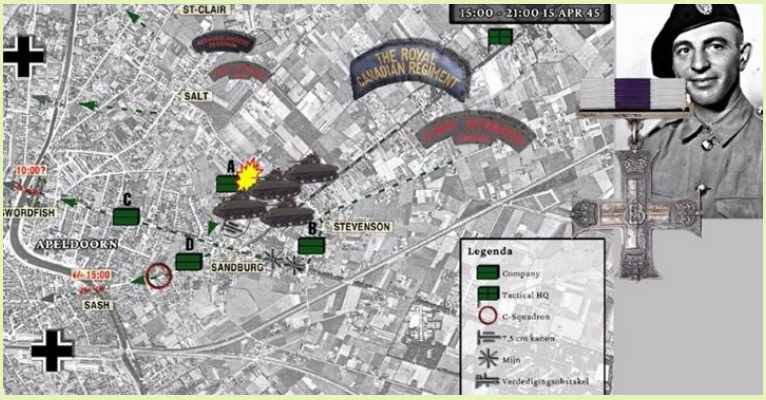


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GCC June General Meeting

Continued from page 5









DEDICATION CEREMONY

BYRON SPRINGBANK VETERANS MONUMENT

Remember ~ Reflect ~ Preserve



Date and Time:

October 3rd, 10:30am for 11:00am Ceremony.

Location: Springbank Park, London, Ontario.

Enter at Springbank Gate,
Commissioners Road West at North Street.

Parking at/near the site.

Dress:

Medals to be worn. Dress for weather, this will be a rain or shine event.

Guests will be seated for the Ceremony.

Canada Celebrates Military Family Appreciation Day



September 20 marks the 8th annual Military Family Appreciation Day. On this day, we honour those who might not wear the uniform, but play a critical role in keeping Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members and Veterans strong, ready and supported.

While our CAF members serve, their families serve right along with them, bringing continuous support. While a CAF member must make sacrifices when called to duty, the family must make sacrifices at home. At other times, the military family serves as a safe harbour as they join their loved one at each posting. This support continues in the transition to the civilian world, as our members begin their life after service.

As military members frequently relocate as part of their service, their families may face increased challenges in accessing housing, childcare and employment opportunities. Over the years, the Department of National Defence, the CAF, and Veterans Affairs Canada have taken meaningful action to address these challenges. Canadian military families experience their own unique struggles, needs and issues – and we are committed to supporting them at every step of their journey.

We recognize the critical role that military families play in supporting CAF members and Veterans, and we salute their outstanding contribution to supporting the well-being of Canada's service members. Whether at home or abroad, they embody the best of Canada.

"To our military families, we thank you for your valued support of our Canadian Armed Forces. Families are essential to the success of our operations, and we must show our sincerest gratitude for their contributions. Today and always, let us reflect on the sacrifices that military families make, and salute their resilience and devotion to Canada."

The Honourable Bill Blair, Former Minister of National Defence

Canada chooses TKMS as preferred bidder for CPSP submarine fleet

Carney announces the preferred supplier for the Canadian Patrol Submarine Project – the largest defence procurement in Canadian history

Canada has selected Germany's TKMS as the preferred bidder to build a fleet of up to 12 submarines for the Royal Canadian Navy's CPSP program.

The assumptions that shaped decades of Canadian defence and security are being upended. Climate change is causing our Arctic region to warm nearly three times faster than the global average – a shift that adversaries are actively looking to exploit. In this increasingly dangerous and divided world, Canada must be prepared to defend ourselves and our Allies. To that end, Canada's new government has reached 2% of defence spending for the first time since the fall of the Berlin Wall, transformed defence procurement, and secured over 20 defence and security partnerships in a year.

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Canada chooses TKMS as preferred bidder for CPSP submarine fleet

Continued from page 7



The Government of Canada and TKMS will now enter into negotiations to finalise the contracts and all arrangements required to deliver the requirements of the CPSP. Canada will conclude contracting no later than the end of 2027, with the first four submarines to be delivered ahead of schedule, in 2034. In the event that negotiations with the preferred supplier are unsuccessful, Canada may designate Hanwha Ocean as the preferred supplier and enter into negotiations.

Key to this mission is the Canadian Patrol Submarine Project (CPSP). Submarines enable the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) to defend threats near and far from Canada's shores. Yet, our current fleet is aging, with only one of four submarines seaworthy. With the longest coastline in the world, Canada's ability to deploy underwater surveillance capability is critical. Our security and sovereignty depend on them.

At Canadian Forces Base Halifax, the Prime Minister, Mark Carney, announced that Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) has been selected as the preferred supplier to begin supplier to begin negotiations for delivering Canada's next fleet of submarines to the RCN. This will be the largest defence procurement in Canadian history, and it will equip the RCN with the capabilities they need to keep Canadians safe.

With ultra-low acoustic and magnetic signatures, TKMS' 212CD is one of the stealthiest submarines in the world. It is capable of Arctic patrol, undersea surveillance, special forces deployment, and it is fully NATO-interoperable. These submarines provide an unparalleled combination of advanced technology and lethality that will enable the RCN to detect, track, deter and, if necessary, defeat adversaries in all three oceans bordering Canada. This procurement will bolster Canadian security through a platform shared by Germany and Norway, two of Canada's closest Allies.

The Government of Canada and TKMS will now enter into negotiations to finalise the contracts and all arrangements required to deliver the requirements of the CPSP. Canada will conclude contracting no later than the end of 2027, with the first four submarines to be delivered ahead of schedule, in 2034. In the event that negotiations with the preferred supplier are unsuccessful, Canada may designate Hanwha Ocean as the preferred supplier and enter into negotiations.

The CPSP is being advanced by the Defence Investment Agency and aligns with Canada's Defence Industrial Strategy. Under the Build-Partner-Buy framework, the project demonstrates the Partner approach, with collaborations with trusted Allies to develop and deliver capabilities while ensuring industrial and economic benefits for Canada. The CPSP will prioritise investments across the Canadian supply chain, to create high-paying jobs, leverage Canadian defence industries, and maximise benefits for Canadian workers and businesses.

Canada is taking full responsibility for our defence, including in the Arctic.

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Canada chooses TKMS as preferred bidder for CPSP submarine fleet

Continued from page 8

We have made the largest increase in defence investment in a generation. We are transforming our regulatory system from one that checks boxes to one that builds our defence industrial base with speed and scale. By investing in our people, our capabilities, our industry, and our partnerships, we are building a stronger, more secure Canada – one that is ready to meet today's challenges, support our Allies, and shape a safer, more prosperous future for generations to come.

"In a more dangerous and divided world, Canada must be prepared to defend our interests, protect our citizens, build our economy, and secure our future. To that end, we are making the largest defence procurement in our nation's history with speed, ambition, and discipline. Canada's next submarine fleet will secure our coastlines and waters, and their construction will have enormous, lasting benefits for Canadian industries and workers. Together with our German and Norwegian Allies, we will build at speed and scale to expand our strategic capabilities and create greater strategic autonomy. We will build this fleet to build Canada strong."

The Rt. Hon. Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada

"Today's decision will provide the Royal Canadian Navy a critical capability, ensuring we can defend and secure Canada's vast coastline. From coast to coast to coast, this historic investment in the Canadian Armed Forces will bring strong economic benefits and jobs across the country."

The Hon. David J. McGuinty, Minister of National Defence

"This historic submarine procurement represents more than an investment in Canada's security – it is an investment in Canadians. By leveraging the Industrial and Technological Benefits Policy, we are creating good-paying jobs, strengthening domestic supply chains, supporting Canadian businesses and innovators, and delivering long-term economic benefits across the country."

The Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions

"Today's announcement demonstrates that Canada can move at the speed of relevance. Completing a competitive process of this scale in roughly eight months, while maintaining a rigorous and fair evaluation, is an important milestone in modernising defence procurement. It reflects an understanding that national security and economic security go hand in hand. We evaluated proposals on their ability to deliver world-class capability to the Royal Canadian Navy, and on the long-term benefits they will create for Canadian workers, industry, and innovation through our Build-Partner-Buy approach. Finally, this process identified two highly credible solutions. By naming both a preferred supplier and a reserve supplier, we've strengthened the resilience of this program and positioned Canada to deliver this critical capability faster and with greater confidence."

The Hon. Stephen Fuhr, Secretary of State (Defence Procurement)

ADDITONAL INFO

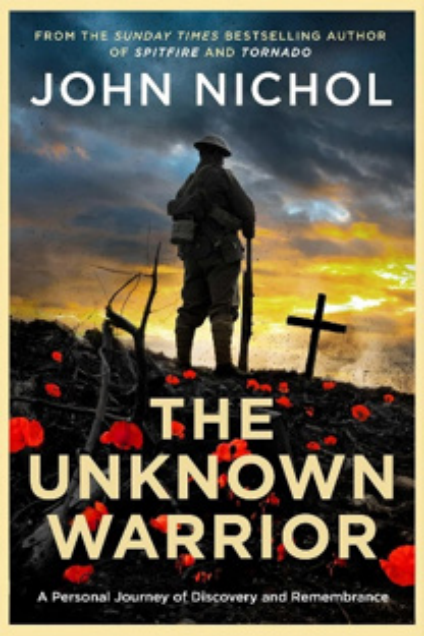
The CPSP will deliver up to 12 modern submarines to replace the aging Victoria-class fleet.

- The RCN's current submarine fleet will remain operational into the mid-to-late 2030s.
- The project will be subject to Canada's modernised Industrial and Technological Benefits Policy, ensuring the investment generates long-term economic benefits for Canadians.

Advancing the CPSP supports Canada's broader commitments to sovereignty, continental defence, and collective security with allies, including through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).

Book Review

by Patrick M. Dennis/Sic itur ad astra



The Unknown Warrior: A Personal Journey of Discovery and Remembrance

By John Nichol, London, Simon &Schuster UK Ltd, 2024. 385 pages (paperback), $24.99. ISBN 978-1398-509450.

On 25 May 2000, I stood to attention at the National Vimy Memorial as the remains of Canada's unknown soldier began the journey home to a final resting place at the National War Memorial in Ottawa.

Twenty-four years later, Newfoundland laid to rest its own unknown. Indeed, these two solemn events, echoed in many ways the first such ceremony that was held in London's Westminster Abbey on 11 November 1920. And it is that remarkable story which has been vividly brought to life by author John Nichol in his moving account of *The Unknown Warrior*.

Nichol is a former RAF navigator who was shot down, captured, and tortured during the first Gulf War. In the decades since, he has published eighteen books. This latest volume is exceptionally well-researched and has won widespread praise, even from British military historians. Like many veterans, he has long respected the tradition of honouring those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. But it was an official appearance at the tomb of Britain's Unknown Warrior on the 100th anniversary of the Great War which piqued his interest. How did this national symbol of remembrance come about so quickly after the Great War had ended? How was one soldier chosen? And who was the first to propose such a plan? Thus began a quest that would, in the end, reveal to him an astonishing tale that begged to be told.

One can only imagine the unbearable grief of wives, parents, and siblings who once mourned the loss of these loved ones, but never had the chance to say farewell or goodbye at a graveside. Nichol captures the raw emotions of such a cruel fate, and directly connects these families to the journey to Westminster of one fallen soldier who would eventually represent the remains of hundreds of thousands.

This passage is elegantly juxtaposed with Nichol's own travels across the Great War battlefields as he sought to discover answers to the many mysteries associated with the former, and attempted to understand better "what those men saw and heard, and tasted and felt when the earth and sky were erupting in a maelstrom of shot and shell." To do so, he has written gripping first-hand descriptions of soldiers in battle, thus giving the entire narrative an extraordinary and eerie sense of 'you are there.' And for context, Nichol also provides essential details of the broader military strategy. More interestingly, though, he employs an effective device to help make the reader more comfortable with this approach. He jumps seamlessly back and forth between the past and present, bridging the century-old gap with reflections on modern day battles like the Falklands and Afghanistan, each of which clearly have many things in common with memory and remembrance of the Great War.

At the centre of this fascinating story is Reverend David Railton, a British military chaplain who rendered services for hundreds, perhaps thousands of fallen soldiers, many of whom were unidentified. To help dignify their sacrifice and burial, this Padre draped their remains in his personal Union Jack. Post-war he would actively seek to create a national symbol that would represent all the missing. And in time, his iconic standard would become a key character in the entire drama of the Unknown Warrior.

As for the reader, we are not spared from what Nichol refers to as "the brutality of the Great War" and the profound grief of those left behind. The numbers are staggering. There are 526,826 British and Commonwealth missing.

Continued on page 11

Book Review *Continued from page 10*

Of these, just 187,861 have graves with headstones which bear the Kipling inscription: Known Unto God. Memorials to these missing, particularly in France and Belgium, are breathtaking. The Thiepval Memorial, with 72,000 names, is colossal but crushing, the Menin Gate, with nearly 55,000 names, is cathedral-like but unnerving, and the Vimy Memorial, with over 11,000 names, remains resplendent but sobering. For those mourning an individual loved one, though, these memorials provided scant comfort. The Unknown Warrior, however, speaks directly to each family member in a special way, a sentiment that Nichol has superbly captured.

Meanwhile, many other families knew precisely where their loved one was buried and refused to accept the government prohibition against bringing these remains home, even at their own expense. Indeed, after April 1915 it was illegal to repatriate the body of a soldier from the Western Front. But this did not stop two Canadian parents from attempting to do so, and Nichol's inclusion of their stories gives an added Canadian dimension to this account.

In parallel with the travel of the "unknown," from a small village in France to London, Nichol also reveals the genesis of Britain's national cenotaph, and the details of the short-notice commission given to Sir Edwin Lutyens to design and build this memorial. His "cenotaph" soon became the template for similar memorials around the world. But the word cenotaph comes from the Greek meaning 'empty tomb.'

So, while it represents the sacrifice of all those who defended the nation, it was quickly recognized that for the healing process to begin, the friends and families of the missing needed closure of their own, a chance to bury their loved one in their own minds. More importantly, this one interment was designed "to heal the pain of the nation's bereaved, rather than glorifying the cause of their loss." Hence was born the first unknown warrior project.

Readers will be pleased to discover that even the much-cheaper soft-bound version of this book contains maps and sixteen photos that complement the text. It is eminently readable and is arguably a must for the bookshelf of any student of military history. Likewise, it is written by a historian who clearly has studied war and conflict throughout the ages. Evidence of his acumen in this respect is clearly evident. That said, it is an apocryphal quote attributed to British Prime Minister William Gladstone (1809-1898) that seems to best capture the whole idea of The Unknown Warrior. "Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead," Gladstone is alleged to have said, "and I will measure with mathematical exactitude the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals." If nothing else, the great solemnity with which Britain buried its Unknown Warrior truly reflected those ideals. For his part, Nichol has offered a wonderful tribute to all the missing. Indeed, his work gives new meaning to Laurence Binyon's heartfelt declaration: We will remember them.

Commemoration calendar

September 15:
Canadians begin the Battle of Courcelette during the Somme Offensive (1916)

September 15–16:
Canadian peacekeepers saw heavy action in the Medak Pocket, Croatia (1993)

September 21:
Battle of Britain Sunday (1940)

September 26–28:
Battle of Thiepval Ridge (1916)

October 2–November 8:
Battle of the Scheldt (1944)

October 26:
Canadians launch their attack on Passchendaele (1917)

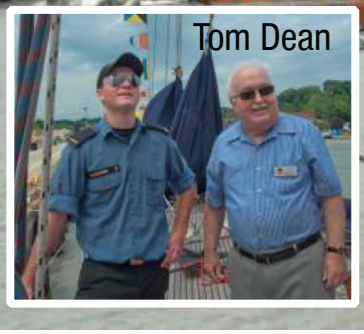
November 1-2:
Battle of Valenciennes: the Canadian Corps re-capture the northern French city of Valenciennes and surrounding areas from the German Army (1918)

November 11:
End of World War I: November 11, 1918, at 11:00 a.m.—the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. Remembrance Day

Dates from Salute Newsletter and other sources

The article below is from Summer 2018 GCC Newsletter

GCC members visit to HMCS Oriole at Port Stanley


Tom Dean


Beth Sayler


Gerry Treble


Doug Acton & Barry Graham


Heather Broadhead


Dave Barton
Crew, Swiftsure Race, 1968

On July 20th to 22nd HMCS Oriole, the RCN Tall-ship, was alongside in Port Stanley as part of the RCN's Great Lakes tour. HMCS ORIOLE'S visit was particularly special this year, as it is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Navy League of Canada. This sailing vessel is the oldest commissioned ship in the Royal Canadian Navy and also the longest serving. She was launched in 1921. She was acquired by the RCN for service in WWII then returned to private ownership. She was reacquired and commissioned on June 1952. Though she spent much of her Navy life on the West Coast, her home port is now Halifax.

On the Friday afternoon, some of the GCC mob had a chance to look over the ketch and talk to the ship's company. After a good poke around, we just managed to dodge a huge thunderstorm and head for cover in Legion Branch 410 across the street where we continued to mingle with the crew.

Disposing of UXO in Solomon Islands



CAPTION: *Vanuatu Mobile Force Lance Corporal Larry Qara, Royal Solomon Islands Police Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Department Police Constable Barnabas Talo and Royal Australian Navy sailor, Leading Seaman Clearance Diver Bradley Fox discuss explosive ordnance disposal techniques at Cook Barracks in Port Vila, Vanuatu, during Operation Render Safe 26-2. Story by Captain Jacob Joseph. Photo by Petty Officer Daniel Goodman.*

No one knows exactly how many bombs left over from World War II are in Solomon Islands, but those working to safely dispose of unexploded ordnance (UXO) think there could be thousands of tons.

Chief Petty Officer Thomas Buchanan is the Australian Defence Force adviser to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) Explosive Ordnance Disposal Department.

Since 2019, under the Defence Cooperation Program, ADF personnel have been posted to Solomon Islands to advise RSIPF about explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and coordinate ADF EOD training teams.

Chief Petty Officer Buchanan deployed on Operation Render Safe, along with two RSIPF EOD officers, to search a lagoon in Tuvalu's northernmost atoll for explosive remnants of war.

The clearance diver of almost 20 years said the RSIPF team were regional leaders for UXO disposal, and their technical expertise made a significant contribution to the operation.

In Solomon Islands, the dangers of UXO can be a daily occurrence.

"We've been to sites where hundreds of mortars have washed up on a beach after a storm," Chief Petty Officer Buchanan said.

"One of the mortars had white phosphorous inside and was burning out of control before we got there."

"Another time, a tree exploded near a person's home.

"It had grown around the UXO in the 80 years since the war finished.

"Unfortunately, it detonated when someone started a fire nearby – they could never have known there was an artillery shell in the tree," Chief Petty Officer Buchanan said.

"The situation in Solomon Islands is you never really know where a UXO will turn up."

When RSIPF EOD officers find UXOs, or receive a report from the community, they either dispose of the UXO on site or bring it back to their EOD facility at Hells Point, Honiara – the site of fierce fighting during World War II, with stockpiles of ammunition.

Today, Hells Point is equipped to x-ray and cut high-explosive ordnance before safely burning or detonating munitions in custom-made pits.

Items of unexploded ordnance are cut in half, if possible, to make disposal easier.

But first, they must be x-rayed and classified to make sure they don't hold toxic chemicals, such as picric acid, mustard gas or white phosphorous – common among munitions during the war.

Chief Petty Officer Buchanan said it was a technical process but one the RSIPF have the expertise to handle safely.

"Seeing the RSIPF EOD team bring in not one or two munitions, but sometimes hundreds per job is really rewarding," Chief Petty Officer Buchanan said.

"It's one of the highlights of my career, helping them get the job done, knowing that these UXOs are removed from the local population and not spoiling the environment."

CONTACT Newsletter #340
https://contactairlandandsea.com/2026/07/30/disposing-of-uxo-in-solomon-islands/

ON TARGET: It is High Time for the RCAF to take on a Firefighting Role



By Scott Taylor

Last Monday there was a national news story to the effect that the Liberal government is leasing 10 firefighting aircraft in advance of this year's wildfire season.

At present firefighting efforts and assets are controlled and managed by the individual provinces.

This will be a federal asset which can be deployed where it will be needed most across the country. Eleanor Olszewski, the federal minister of emergency management, announced that provincial and territorial wildfire agencies can now request this leased aircraft fleet through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC).

What this deal entails is the lease of four Dash 8-400 AT air tankers which have a 10,000-litre capacity for either water or fire retardant. There is also five rotary aircraft and one bird dog spotter aircraft included in the overall lease package.

Two additional mobile forward attack tanker bases round out the list of leased assets. These support assets can be quickly installed at airports near the site of the wildfires and be used to rapidly refuel and upload the aircraft with fire retardant.

Minister Olszewski told reporters that her department chose to lease the fleet of aircraft as it meant there would not be a delay of three to five years if they were to purchase similar aircraft. The contracts were issued to Conair Group Inc, Coldstream Helicopters and VIH Helicopters. Included in the lease is the cost of the pilots to fly them and the maintenance of the aircraft.

So far so good. It sounds like the federal government is getting out ahead of the growing wildfire crisis by acquiring a cost effective, private sector reserve asset.

However the question begs, why not simply task the RCAF with the role of combatting wildfires and provide them with the proper aircraft to do the job. Canada currently makes what is considered to be the finest water bomber in the world, the De Havilland-Canadair 515, aka the 'Super Scooper'.

Originally designed and built by Canadair, the DHC 515 was built by Viking Aircraft in Victoria and they are now produced by De Havilland in Calgary. The beauty of the DHC 515 design is that it can skim lakes like a float plane and literally scoop nearly 7,000 litres of water into its bomb-bay in just 12 seconds.

The four Dash 8-400's just leased by CIFFC have a 10,000 litre capacity but then they need to land at an airport and be manually reloaded with water or retardant. Essentially they are commercial passenger aircraft re-configured into a rudimentary water bomber.

The DHC 515 is custom built to do just one job and that is to fight fires.

As for those Air Force Colonel Blimps who are no doubt readying their tubs for a good thumping over the very idea that our RCAF pilots be relegated to fire fighting duties, I say 'stow it'.

The order book for DHC 515 Super Scoopers is replete with foreign Air Forces such as Portugal, Spain, Greece, Italy and Indonesia. That's right folks, other allied Air Forces are tasked with the role of protecting resources and lives from natural disasters.

For the record, with an estimated 318 billion trees, Canada ranks second in the world behind Russia for forest density.

Yet the RCAF senior brass obstinately resists taking on the formal responsibility of standing up a squadron of water bombers, even though this current lease arrangement illustrates the urgent necessity to possess such a national resource. Talk about short sightedness.

Think about the public relations value of such a squadron.

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ON TARGET: It is High Time for the RCAF to take on a Firefighting Role

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You could not get a more high profile means to endear the RCAF to the Canadian public then having them fly to the rescue to save threatened communities and protect vital resources.

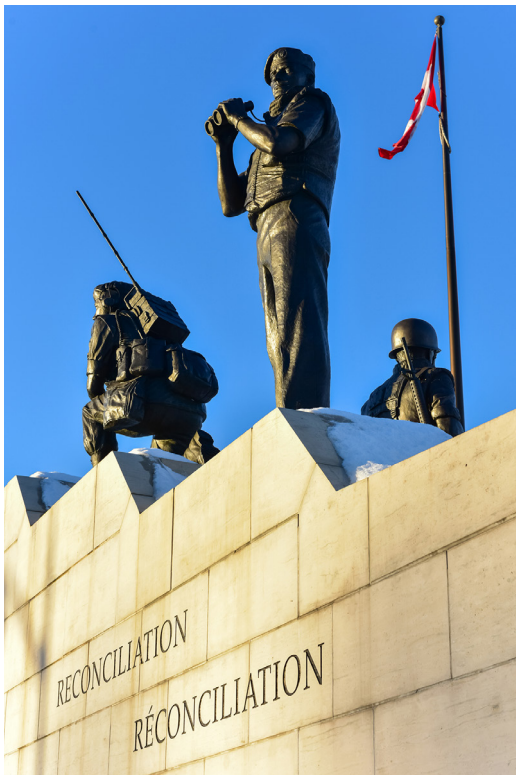
Not to mention doing so in the world's premiere water bomber designed and built here in Canada.

Furthermore, as wildfires are hemispherically seasonal in nature, when required or requested we could deploy this crack water bombing squadron to allied nations during their winter wildfire season.

It is a win-win-win, but the RCAF brass covet their new F-35's and only the F-35's. Pity.

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CANADIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

Canada National Peacekeepers' Day



Reconciliation: The Peacekeeping Monument in Ottawa

On August 9th Canada observed National Peacekeeper's Day. It comes as Canada is rebalancing it's contribution to peacekeeping missions. Next is an article from Canadian Defence Review



CAF rebalances operations to strengthen global footprint

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is rebalancing its global operational commitments to better align resources with evolving defence priorities in an increasingly complex security environment. This includes closing Operations KOBOLD, SNOWGOOSE, SOPRANO, and CROCODILE, and reducing its contribution to Operation CALUMET.

Approximately 50-60 CAF members currently assigned to these missions will be progressively reintegrated into higher-priority roles supporting operations at home and abroad. These changes will better align CAF resources with current defence priorities, including defending Canada, supporting the Euro-Atlantic region, and contributing to Indo-Pacific stability.

This approach focuses personnel and capabilities where they have the greatest impact, while sustaining commitments, maintaining readiness for emerging challenges, and enhancing operational effectiveness with allies and partners.

The changes will be implemented over two years in coordination with partners. Operation KOBOLD in Kosovo will conclude by the end of 2026, and Operation CALUMET in the Sinai Peninsula will be reduced over the same period. Operations SNOWGOOSE in Cyprus, SOPRANO in South Sudan, and CROCODILE in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be concluded by mid-2027.

Over the years, CAF members on these missions have supported partners with professionalism and specialized expertise, reinforcing Canada's reputation as a reliable ally and partner. The CAF recognizes and values the dedication of the many sailors, soldiers, aviators, and special operations forces members who have served with distinction on these operations.

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CAF rebalances operations

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The CAF will continue to support international peace operations through Operations PRESENCE, CALUMET, and JADE, in coordination with allies and partners including the United Nations, NATO, and the Multinational Force and Observers.

In addition, the Military Training and Cooperation Program will continue delivering pre-deployment training to troop-contributing nations through international Peace Support Training Centres, including in regions linked to these operations.

"The service of Canadian Armed Forces members on these missions has made a real difference. Their contributions have strengthened partnerships, and advanced peace and security around the world. As the global security environment evolves, the Canadian Armed Forces must remain ready and focused where it can have the greatest impact. This rebalancing will help sustain our commitments and strengthen readiness, enabling Canada to continue to contribute effectively alongside allies and partners."

The Honourable David J. McGuinty, Minister of National Defence

"For decades, our members have served with courage and commitment in some of the world's most challenging environments, making lasting contributions to international peace and stability. As the global strategic landscape evolves, we must adapt our operational posture to ensure the Canadian Armed Forces remains ready to meet the security challenges of today and tomorrow. By rebalancing where we employ our people and capabilities, we are strengthening Canada's ability to defend our country and contribute meaningfully alongside our allies and partners."

General Jennie Carignan, Chief of the Defence Staff

"Our people have made lasting contributions to peace and stability through these missions over many years. As we transition, we remain focused on ensuring the Canadian Armed Forces are ready, relevant, and positioned to meet current and future operational demands."

Major-General Tim Arsenault, Acting Commander Canadian Joint Operations Command

ADDITIONAL INFO

- Although these missions involved relatively small numbers of CAF members, they were primarily staffed by experienced officers and non-commissioned members whose leadership, judgment, and institutional experience are critical to sustaining core capabilities as they are reintegrated into priority
- **Operation CALUMET (Sinai Peninsula)**
  Canada has supported the Multinational Force and Observers since 1985. Task Force El Gorah will reduce from approximately 40 CAF members to approximately 10 by the end of 2026, maintaining a presence that provides air traffic coordination and mission-critical flight information in support of the Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty.
- **Operation CROCODILE (Democratic Republic of the Congo)**
  Approximately nine CAF members contribute to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, providing expertise in operations, planning, liaison, and training in support of stabilization efforts.
- **Operation KOBOLD (Kosovo)**
  Since 2008, the CAF has been maintaining a commitment of approximately five CAF members to support the NATO-led Kosovo Force, providing logistics, headquarters support, and operational coordination contributing to regional stability in the Western Balkans.
- **Operation SNOWGOOSE (Cyprus)**
  Canada's current contribution consists of one senior CAF officer embedded within the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, building on decades of Canadian leadership in support of stability on the island.
- **Operation SOPRANO (South Sudan)**
  Approximately nine CAF members serve as staff officers and military liaison officers with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, providing planning expertise and operational coordination in a complex security environment.

Looking for Funds* to Assist with your Further Education?





The Garrison Community Council
London and Region

STUDENT BURSARIES 2026

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31 Signal Regiment Detachment	London
4th Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment	London, Stratford
31 Service Battalion	London, Windsor, Hamilton
31 Military Police	London

The submission deadline for applications is

31 October 2026



FILE PHOTO: *Private Malakai Williams from Direct Fire Support Weapons Platoon, 5th/7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, fires a Carl-Gustaf 84mm recoilless rifle near a Supacat Vehicle during Exercise Predator's Walk at Mount Bundey Training Area, Northern Territory, 29 May 2026. Story by Captain Charlie Miranda. Photo by Corporal Michael Currie.*

Mitigating brain injury from blasts

Repeated low-level blast overpressure exposure in training is recognised as a workplace hazard – and Defence is implementing new measures to better understand, monitor and manage this risk.

One of these new measures is the release of the Army Standing Instruction (Force Preservation) 015 – Blast Overpressure – a key step in formally recognising low-level blast exposure as an occupational hazard.

The Army Standing Instruction (ASI) sets the conditions for how blast exposure is to be managed, requiring commanders to actively consider the issue when planning and conducting training.

This consideration ensures risk is reduced so far as reasonably practicable, while maintaining combat effectiveness.

Lieutenant Colonel Reny Pinkerton, Army G7 Lead Planner for the mitigation of this workplace hazard in Defence Training, said blast overpressure had always been part of how Army trained for war, although its impacts on soldiers are not yet fully understood.

The ASI recognises that repeated low-level exposure, while not causing immediate injury, may have cumulative impacts over time.

"This is about looking after our people, while increasing capability," Lieutenant Colonel Pinkerton said.

"It's about making training more deliberate and ensuring readiness is maintained, while minimising exposure.

"It's also helping us increase our lethality, including seeing greater employment of simulation such as [the] Weapons Training Simulator and Instrumented Force-on-Force systems, which come with an array of data analytics.

"This means soldiers are now able to more frequently train on these weapon systems."

The work forms part of Army's response to Recommendation 61 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which focused on improving how brain health risks are understood, monitored and managed across Defence.

Army is also contributing to a growing body of international research, including a major study examining how cumulative blast exposure might affect cognitive performance across a soldier's career.

This year's National Science Week highlights how science and technology can solve real-world challenges, with resulting research is helping build the evidence base needed to better protect soldiers, while maintaining operational effectiveness.

"Part of this is about building an evidence base," Lieutenant Colonel Pinkerton said.

"We are working with Defence Science and Technology Group, Joint Health Command, Army HQ and our Five Eyes and NATO partners to better understand exposure and its potential effects over time.

"Every soldier has a role in this reform, together with their families and veterans.

"It's key they are informed, listened to, and encouraged to share feedback as this work continues."

Across the Land Domain Training System, practical changes are also being introduced to better manage exposure.

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Mitigating brain injury from blasts

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These include structured controls such as safety distances, limits on repetitions, recovery periods between exposures and the application of best practice guidance specific to weapon systems and training environments.

Exposure is also being recorded more systematically through tools such as the Land Range Safety Management Tool and the Defence Science and Technology Blast Monitoring Program.

To support the changes, Army has also released a new Blast Overpressure Awareness Training e-learning package for personnel.

Its development was led by Army G7 Training Plans Branch – Staff Officer Major Ralph Huynh and his predecessor Major Jacob Nicholson.

“Education is critical,” Major Huynh said.

“We want operators, instructors and commanders to understand the hazard and how to manage it in practical terms.

“This is a shared responsibility across the joint force.”

The training reinforces that monitoring and exposure controls are preventive and proportionate.

“One of the key messages is that brain health monitoring is about protection, not restriction,” Major Huynh said.

“It is designed to support people throughout their careers and ensure the long-term effectiveness of the force.

“We train for war and that involves risk, but we also have a responsibility to manage that risk in training in a way that is evidence-informed, practical and enduring.”

Research and monitoring will continue to inform future policy and training design, with findings expected to further refine exposure thresholds and controls.

CONTACT Newsletter #343
https://contactairlandandsea.com/2026/08/19/protection-from-blast/

Introducing 1st Canadian Division



Photo by Cpl Liam Stagg, Canadian Armed Forces Combat Camera

On Sept. 10, the Canadian Army underwent one of the largest changes in its history as it transitions from divisions responsible for geographic regions in Canada to divisions with purpose-driven mandates.

> *“The Army we have is not the Army we need,” said Lieutenant-General (LGen) Michael Wright, Commander of the Canadian Army, in Inflection Point 2025, which laid out the rationale for and plan to launch a full-scale modernization of the Canadian Army.*

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Introducing 1st Canadian Division Continued from page 19

This means 3rd Canadian Division, which has represented Western Canada for nearly 40 years, will be stood down on Sept. 10.

In its place will stand up 1st Canadian Division, which will assume command of the Canadian Army's three Regular Force brigade groups—1 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (1 CMBG), 2 CMBG and 5 Groupe-brigade mécanisé du Canada (5 GBMC)—and 6th Canadian Combat Support Brigade (6 CCSB), the brigade designed to enable the rest of the Army to conduct its operations. In addition, 1st Canadian Division will also assume command over three newly formed formations: 1st Canadian Artillery Brigade, 1st Canadian Sustainment Brigade and 3rd Canadian Light Infantry Regiment.

It's all part of a push to move the Army away from "contribution warfare," explained LGen Wright on the Feb. 4 edition of the Canadian Army Podcast. Going forward, the goal is to equip and position the Army to be capable of participating in major combat operations as an equal partner.

That is not to say Canada would stop being involved in international operations like those in the Balkans in the 1990s, Afghanistan in the early 2000s, or the more recent Operation IMPACT and Operation REASSURANCE. Instead, the Army's role and involvement in such operations would evolve, as would its place within Canada.

> *"We have not had the ability to actually take a greater role in leading those alliances," LGen Wright explained. "Nor have we truly invested in the capabilities that the Army needs to invest in to be part of the overall joint defence of Canada."*

The Army's modernization and realignment, along with increased investment promised by the federal government, aims to set the Army on the path to achieve both those goals.

Under the current structure, the Army is divided into four divisions focused on distinct geographic regions of Canada. Each division is responsible for everything that happens within its region, including the Regular Force, Reserves, Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups and Canadian Division Support Groups.

While effective when it comes to managing administrative responsibilities, that structure does not optimize the Army's ability to perform its duties domestically and internationally.

The modernized Canadian Army has assigned each division a specific mandate. The aim is to create efficiencies and build a force that is more agile and better able to protect Canadians. Task-specific mandates create economies of effort. For example, the force generation for the Global Response Task Force and the Managed Readiness Plan that sustains Canada's rotational commitment to Multinational Brigade-Latvia are both managed by 1st Canadian Division.

As the Canadian Army's Manoeuvre Division, 1st Canadian Division will focus on building and maintaining a force capable of operating in all types of conflicts up to and including major combat operations.

Headquartered at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Edmonton, 1st Canadian Division will assume command over the Canadian Army's Regular Force formations from across the country. This means gaining command over 2 CMBG from the former 4th Canadian Division, 5 GBMC from 2nd Canadian Division, and 6 CCSB from the former 5th Canadian Division, while continuing to command 1 CMBG.

The incoming brigades will remain in their current locations across Canada, but will now report to their division headquarters in Edmonton. Such an arrangement retains the Canadian Army's coast-to-coast footprint while streamlining the chain of command structure.

The first of the three new formations being stood up as part of 1st Canadian Division is 3rd Canadian Light Infantry Regiment, which is a reassignment of existing units. The third battalions from the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Royal Canadian Regiment and Royal 22e Régiment will be brought together to form the new regiment. LGen Wright explained the new formation will "ensure [the Army is] able to respond with high-readiness forces at scale."

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Introducing 1st Canadian Division

Continued from page 20

Second is 1st Canadian Artillery Brigade. This brigade will be tasked with centralizing and co-ordinating the Division's artillery in support of the deep and close fight. Among the equipment set to fall under the brigade's remit will be the new High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) platform, set to arrive in 2029, as well as new self-propelled howitzers to replace the M777 howitzers currently in the Army's arsenal.

Third is 1st Canadian Sustainment Brigade, designed to provide the logistics required for prolonged high-intensity operations. When fully stood up, the brigade will ensure the Division is fully equipped to sustain itself and survive on the battlefield through managing transportation, maintenance and supply.

Both 1st Canadian Artillery Brigade and 1st Canadian Sustainment Brigade will be headquartered at CFB Edmonton. The three battalions comprising 3rd Canadian Light Infantry Regiment will remain in their current locations, while the regimental headquarters will be located at CFB Petawawa.

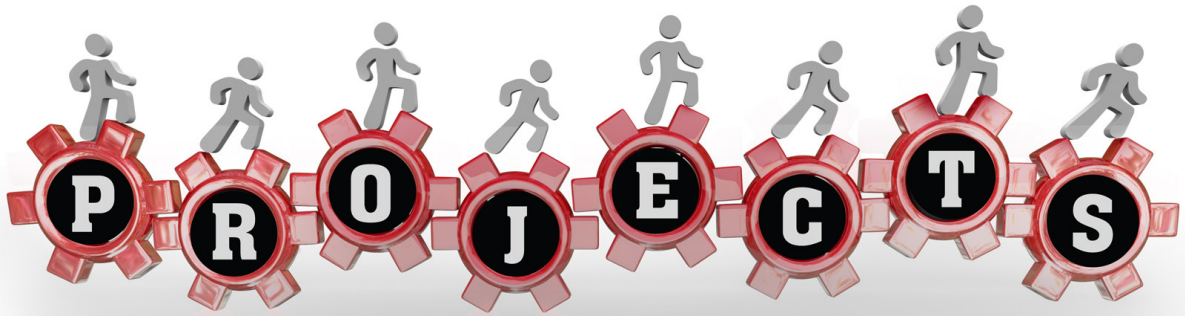
Bringing the Canadian Army's Regular Force formations all under one division brings with it several benefits, both tangible and intangible. Operating at the division level will allow Canada to get away from pure contribution warfare, explained LGen Wright. It's at the division level that the Army must operate to respond to crises at scale.

Furthermore, operating at the division level allows Canada to have national agency, national credibility and national sovereignty, LGen Wright added.

By reactivating 1st Canadian Division, the Canadian Army is making changes that extend beyond realigning its formations. Under 1st Canadian Division, it will continue a history that dates back to the First World War, when the Division was stood up as Canada's first fighting element in the conflict.

With 3rd Canadian Division standing down, its history and lineage will be retained on the Supplementary Order of Battle but can be reactivated as needed. All formations on the Supplementary Order of Battle retain their place in the order of precedence, along with their colours, traditions and battle honours.

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