

THE ADMIRAL'S VIEW

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Your Navy, Our People

Over the past year I have used this column to discuss the role of your Navy in contributing to Canada's maritime security, defence and prosperity. I have written about the need for your Navy to operate at home and abroad so as to achieve the broad range of missions that we are responsible for and our need to continue doing so as we move into the near and distant future. I have also focused, quite recently, on the strategic refit of your Navy through the modernization of our Halifax class Canadian Patrol Frigates as they enter their mid-life and the delivery of new and replacement ships through the recently announced National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy.

Although it would be very easy to focus solely on the ships and their inherent modern warfare technologies, the truth of the matter is that it will be our people, who will ensure that we realize success in our operations today even as we prepare for and deliver on the promises for the future. In so doing, we will encounter several challenges and opportunities as we transition in the space of just a few years from our current fleet into a more modern and capable one, with new and replacement classes of ships. To achieve success, it will require the ingenuity, energy and effort of all sailors and the entire Defence Team that supports them, as well as the Canadian Marine Industrial base. Without all of them working together in harmony and collaboration our ships will not be designed, fabricated, outfitted, modernized and integrated into the Fleet, for eventual service for and on behalf of Canadians.

The good news is that we have met our recruiting targets for the past few years and have filled some needed vacancies in most of our critical occupations. The challenge now is to bring these new sailors through our world-class training schools and then give them enough time at sea to consolidate their education and training and develop their expertise. In addition, we must also maintain and sustain our existing capabilities and the skillsets of our personnel, even as the number of ships available diminishes as they are taken out of service for their modernization or refit.

As a result, in order to continue providing our sailors with the time at sea necessary to develop and maintain currency of skills, we are examining



and planning a number of innovative initiatives. For example, we are planning to integrate (embed) some of our junior officers with other navies so that they receive an adequate amount of time at sea necessary to progress their training and acquire sufficient experience so as to not impede their later career progression as they approach opportunities to become commanding officers of our Navy's warships.

We are also examining innovative ways to swap entire crews, while our Canadian ships are deployed. This will allow us to keep our ships operational and in-theatre for extended deployments, while also cycling a greater number of personnel through a deployment and sustaining their skillsets, without saddling one crew with the complete time away. These attempts to maintain currency and to balance the experience across a wider base will not only help to ensure our continuing success in operations for today but will also give us the opportunity to train these same personnel on the new and modernized systems that will be entering the fleet.

In fact, the modernization of the Halifax class will be so extensive that when combined with the new Cyclone helicopter from the RCAF, we will have a generational leap forward in capability, even though the hull will be over 15 years old. That means that we will need to revamp and update all aspects of our training for the new variant even as we employ the older variants in meeting our current obligations. As great as these challenges may appear on the surface they also represent a great opportunity for our sailors to keep pace with changing technologies in the Maritime defence and security domain.

Finally, even during these exciting and challenging times, your Navy will continue to answer the call and deliver the Defence and Security that Canadians have come to expect from your Navy. I have every faith that we will rise to the challenge and we will surpass expectations as we have done so often during interesting times throughout our history.