

THE ADMIRAL'S VIEW

Our Families

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In last month's article, I wrote about Veterans Week and the Remembrance Day ceremonies that took place across Canada in honour of the selfless service of our Canadian veterans. We remembered the sacrifices made by our Canadian Forces men and women, and the Canadian legacy of "service before self". As we remember the sacrifice that our Canadian Forces men and women make when they stand on guard for Canada, let us not forget the sacrifices made by the family members of these men and women who remain behind when their loved ones deploy.

As Canadians, we often take for granted the privileges of democracy, the protection of human rights and the sanctity of law which form such an integral part of our daily lives but which are lacking in the lives of so many in other parts of the world. Canadian Forces members deploy across the globe on behalf of Canada and rely on their Canadian values to bravely face the chaos of the international stage. Whether it is to provide humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of such natural disasters as Hurricane Katrina and the devastating earthquake in Haiti or to battle piracy, terrorism and despotism, members of the CF proudly represent our nation and the values its citizens hold dear. Domestically, they provide support to other government agencies such as the RCMP and the Customs and Border Services Agency, which enforce the laws of Canada in the protection of our freedoms and security. On any given day, Canada's military members stand ready to respond to disasters, to ensure our security as a nation, to support other government departments to provide marine search and rescue, and to deploy around the globe in support of Canada's foreign policy objectives.

The regular working day of a member of the Canadian Forces, whether at sea, on land or in the air, is no ordinary business and the bridge of a ship at sea is no ordinary office. This year, the sailors who crew the ships in the port of Halifax were absent from home for extended periods ranging from weeks to as many as eight months. During this time, countless opportunities with family were lost. Those who have not deployed may find it hard to imagine being away from home for eight months. The sacrifice of a child



who may have to spend 32 consecutive weeks, including weekends, in any given year without his or her parent is significant. Furthermore, this is not a one-time occurrence but rather an event that is repeated year in and year out. Routines that most parents take for granted such as reading a child's bedtime story, attending a daughter's hockey game or a son's school concert are often fleeting opportunities for Canadian Forces members. In addition to these daily events, many special occasions such as the birth of a child, family birthdays and holidays are spent apart. Spouses of deployed personnel must function as single parent families for months of the year in order to keep the family going. They persevere selflessly in their support of the Canadian Forces and ultimately Canadians by enabling our deployed personnel to dedicate their energies to their missions and deployments.

This year, as in other years, many children of Canadian Forces members will be unable to celebrate the season's festivities with a parent because he or she is deployed or on duty. Many more will have the holiday season impacted by preparations for a deployment scheduled to commence immediately after the ringing in of the New Year. We would be loath to forget the families of the fallen whose sacrifice is so much more profound. We remember the one hundred and fifty-eight Canadian service men and women who lost their lives during their service in Afghanistan, along with countless others who made the ultimate sacrifice throughout our history.

To the families of our CF members, we deeply value your continued contributions and sacrifices. Thank you for your tireless commitment and unwavering support. Thank you for your strength and resilience. I wish you all the best for the remainder of 2012 and the future - may you enjoy many years of peace and prosperity.