

THE ADMIRAL'S VIEW

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As we approach the holiday season and reflect back on the events of this past year, I am sure most of you will be struck by the same thought as am I – that this has been a year of unexpected and seminal, game-changing events.

The most prominent of these has been the Arab Spring across the Middle East and Northern Africa. Who among us could have predicted that the tragic self-immolation of a young Tunisian would become the catalyst for revolutions and the overthrowing of oppressive regimes by the collective opposition of their oppressed citizens? From Tunisia to Egypt and Yemen, we in the western world watched with baited breath and astonishment as one nation after another pursued their right to self-determination. In Libya, we rallied together under NATO leadership to protect the Libyan people from certain destruction at the hands of their vengeful dictator. However, we have likely not seen the end of the Arab Spring or its reverberations, as we await the outcome to events such as those unfolding in Syria.

Closer to home, the announcement that the Irving Shipyard had won the bid for the combatant package within the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy was a thunderbolt of great news for this city, this province, this region and for the Canadian marine industry. This has the potential to become a game changer for Atlantic Canadians, as it can provide the stable foundation for the research, development and leveraging of a vibrant maritime and oceans sector here in our own backyard. This will require that we collectively view this as the opportunity it could become, and not just as the awarding of our due. Clearly the future is in our grasp and we have the potential to develop this into a catalyst for our future regional and national prosperity.

The final event that will continue to ripple more subtly throughout Canada, and particularly our military, was the final withdrawal of our combat troops from Afghanistan. Over the course of our sustained



contribution of combat forces to the Afghan War, the stress and strain was felt not only within our military, particularly the Canadian Army, but also in communities throughout Canada. From Bonavista to Victoria, we drew our nation's finest from communities large and small, as we have always done and will continue to do.

As a military leader, I am constantly reminding Canadians of the service and sacrifice by our men and women in uniform. It is especially important that we do so at this time of year when we gather together in our communities to exchange best wishes and to give thanks for our many blessings with families and friends. Even during the holiday season, your military will remain ever vigilant, manning operations and search and rescue centres; deployed on operations in the Mediterranean; on training and mentoring missions with the Afghan Army and Police; and performing a myriad duties in locations all over the world where peace must be kept, order must be upheld and Canadian interests and values must be supported.

So as you gather together with friends, families and loved ones over this holiday season, it would be more than appropriate to pause in your festivities and to take a moment to consider, however briefly, the men and women who continue to serve this nation 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. Or better yet, to reflect on the loved ones of those serving who will celebrate without complaint this holiday season even as they set one less place at their dinner table.

My warmest wishes for a wonderful holiday season and a truly promising New Year.