



From the bridge...

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NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION NAVALE DU CANADA

A Defence Review

On 12 January, the Minister of National Defence Harjit Sajjan confirmed Canada would undertake a defence review to be completed by 31 December 2016. Pundits have speculated that the decisions of this review will impact Canada's defence posture for decades to come. Given the alarm over terrorism, the Middle East and Africa, it may be difficult to ensure due consideration is given to longer term, lower profile but critical issues such as the need for a capable and effective navy.

In the somewhat distant past NAC [NOAC] was engaged in the debate but that has not been the case for some time. This time will be different. NAC will be fully engaged, writing and speaking to Canadians and in particular our MPs in order to communicate the naval point of view.

■ WHAT'S DIFFERENT NOW?

In the last issue of *Starshell* I postulated that we aimed to fulfill three roles: an RCN alumni, a professional society and to educate Canadians. In future issues I will address the alumni and professionalism pillars, but for today, given the defence review

we must focus on educating Canadians and their parliamentarians, specifically those involved in the review of the need for a navy.

Fortunately, we have recently become more capable at tackling this task. The resources we possess now include both a strong membership able to speak with some authority and the financial resources necessary to support our work

We have grown in numbers but equally

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important, have broadened our base by welcoming all who have an interest in our Navy. Our membership is now more representative of Canada, including a cross section of both citizens and serving members. Our serving members now range from naval cadets at Royal Military College through to the Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy including most senior flag officers. Membership spans Canada with increases

in both St. John's and Victoria based branches. The breadth and depth of our membership allows us to speak with some authority on naval matters.

A second key to success are the financial resources to support our education efforts, be it through funding noted scholars to address key issues or expanding our outreach. When we looked at the need to assemble a 'war chest,' members made it quite clear that increasing dues would not fly. Our approach has been to develop two signature events which, while helping define the NAC, might also generate a financial surplus. Thanks to the hard work of the Ottawa Branch, the GALA has become both a place where government, industry and naval leaders can meet, but also the source of funds for NAC operations.

Apart from generating funds, these events have become important contributors to the discussion and education process. Each of the conferences held variously in Ottawa, Victoria and Calgary, have examined in some detail an important aspect of Canada's maritime interests. It is expected that the 2016 conference to be held in Ottawa on October 20th will see a doubling

in attendance and importantly, a large contingent of those supporting the defence review.

While both events help advance our naval affairs efforts, we need to reach out to decision makers via both the written and spoken word. Regarding the written word, Dan Sing has been putting in place a naval affairs effort, while Richard Archer has been concentrating on reaching Canadians through outreach via the spoken word. Both are essential initiatives which will be key to our success in communicating our message.

Somewhat hidden over the horizon the naval affairs group has been working on our messages and how we approach Canadians. We have crafted these messages with the intent that our branches and members across the country can use them to engage local personalities and even to counter bad press and reporting. NAC News Issue 134 put forward the work so far on messaging:

■ Master Message

Canada needs a capable and effective Navy.

■ Key Messages

- (1) Canada's national interests of peace and security and economic prosperity are intertwined;
- (2) Canada possesses a vast, resource-rich ocean estate;
- (3) Canada is an increasingly global, sea-trading nation.
- (4) Beyond its sovereign waters, Canada values, and is an ardent advocate of the rule of law at sea and of international peace and security.
- (5) There are threats to elements of Canada's national interests.
- (6) Future threats to our national interests are difficult to predict.
- (7) Canada must not rely exclusively on others to protect and further its national interests.

(8) Canada's peace and security contributions to the United Nations, to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and to other defence and security arrangements must be meaningful.

(9) Future Canadian governments will likely one day need to send Canadian naval and maritime air forces into harm's way.

(10) Without the establishment and continuous maintenance of ready-to-deploy, ready-to-act, capable and effective Canadian naval and maritime air forces which are purposely designed to operate against current and future threats in Canadian international and far-away waters, the maritime-related elements of Canada's intertwined national interests of peace and security and economic prosperity will be at risk.

(11) A capable and effective Navy is ultimately all about avoiding, preventing and deterring costly conflict and war.

■ The Written Word

In writing, we intend to take two approaches. First quick response, short notes that appear as opinion pieces in news media often in response to what others have written. Social media will be important here especially since the new government has expressed an intent to consult new media commentary as part of the decision making process. The second is longer, in-depth, well researched articles that address issues critical to the defence review debate.

For the 'newsy' items it is hoped that members across the country will engage in responsible thoughtful letter and OpEd writing addressing both local and national issues. Such contributions could be over your personal signature or, when appropriate, saying you are a member of the Naval Association of Canada. In some cases it will be important to write on behalf of NAC and so identify the organization. While every piece should be measured and thoughtful, not reactionary, if you are putting the piece

forward on behalf of NAC, please take the time to have others in your Branch or National look it over prior to submission. With the review there will undoubtedly be an increased level of discourse—we need to respond quickly where appropriate.

The Naval Affairs team will develop in-depth analytical articles examining key issues. In many cases these will involve funded research by nationally and internationally renowned experts. We are also considering ways to use the *Canadian Naval Review* to both raise the profile of naval issues and engage a wider range of experts. We will need to mount an effort to get these articles in the hands of those developing defence policy, particularly the so-called 'kids in short pants' that support parliamentary policy development.

■ The Spoken Word

Branches have been active in starting B to get the message out through OUTREACH. In one area alone, the OUTREACH team has presented to twenty-two different organizations. Richard with Dan and others are now working to renew both the message and materials currently in use. While the materials will be refreshed Nationally, it is intended only as a template which branches can then modify the package to suit local interests. This continues to be important but we need to now also focus on the teams that make up the MP's riding infrastructure which was critical to the election of the MP. These folks have a significant impact on what MPs think and MPs in turn through their caucus have an impact on party policy. Local OUTREACH not only has a local impact, but it can be critical to educating our leadership as to the importance of a capable Navy. It also has the potential for encouraging community members to participate in the unfolding Defence Review by giving them the naval information they need.

Again on a local level, but quarterbacked by National, we are planning to further educate MPs through face-to-face discussion with our naval leadership. The concept is for NAC to organize meetings in major centres across the country during parliamen-

tary recess periods when MPs are back in their ridings. Senior naval leaders will meet with small groups of four or so to discuss naval affairs. These will be NAC labelled but held at naval facilities whenever possible.

■ In Ottawa

At the same time we must intensify interactions with decision makers in Ottawa. We need to continue to refine our message

and, using the material developed by the above initiatives, get in front of the parliamentary committees and groups charged with carrying out the defence review. Our national naval affair group needs to concentrate on these important opportunities.

The coming months may well be crucial to the future of the RCN. Support of the defence review process, through education of those charged with this work, should be our highest priority as it may affect our navy for

decades to come. We need to focus both locally and nationally to implement a multilevel approach. Now is the time to get involved on a personal basis, writing, speaking and helping make sure we get our message across.

We have been building this 'vehicle' called NAC for some time ... *it's time to take it for a spin!*

Yours aye,

Jim