



The bridge

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NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF CANADA
ASSOCIATION NAVALE DU CANADA

I want to echo Ken Lait's comments thanking our Calgary team for a job well done – **BRAVO ZULU!** Our AGM was, in my opinion, a landmark event. Not only did we have a significant increase in the participation rate, but we also moved beyond the customary perfunctory proceedings that are the bread and butter of an AGM, to what I saw as a spirited discussion of who we are and where we are going. Members' questions and comments were challenging but constructive. It was evident we are pulling together and see a strong, vibrant and supportive NAC as essential to the future of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Thank you to a fellow member, Vice Admiral Mark Norman for the kind comments in his letter that appears on page three. As NAC members we should all be proud of the progress he has recognized.

The Admiral highlights the changes we have made in becoming an open organization welcoming all who share our interest in educating Canadians as to the need for a capable and effective navy. He also notes that we are not only underway, but making way with our series of successful conferences and the signature Battle of the Atlantic Galas that have created connections with some of Canada's most influential and well connected citizens.

All that is not to say we have forgotten camaraderie. It is an important part of the mix and interestingly, when a Branch grows, by attracting new members, camaraderie similarly increases—a very symbiotic relationship.

By the time this is published you will have no doubt read a series of articles regarding the tribulations of HMCS *Athabaskan*. With the loss of our AORs and almost simultaneous decommissioning of the DDH-280s, we now have a very different navy. Our frigates are in top form following mid-life upgrades, three of the four Victoria-class are at

RCN Photo: Lt(N) Jarrod David Francis via David Pugliese, Postmedia News, July 20, 2015.



HMCS *Athabaskan* photographed recently near Sydney, NS, Canada's last destroyer, is temporarily sidelined after a series of engine problems and other technical issues.

sea and our Kingston-class continue to do yeoman service. However, the inability to operate independently worldwide without allies providing resupply and area air defence is a blow. Fellow member Eric Lerhe's Policy Paper:

http://www.cgai.ca/the_asia_pacific_and_the_royal_canadian_navy

points out that we can only influence Asia-Pacific region, so essential to our economic well-being when we return to full Canadian task group deployments.

While the AOPS program is solid, replacing the tankers, fifteen frigates/destroyers and our submarines presents Canada with an unprecedented funding challenge—far larger than that currently being quoted.

Even the present defence program that

does not include submarine replacement and most likely underestimates frigate replacement costs will undoubtedly be problematic for DND.

Ensuring we have the capable and effective navy that Canada needs will only be possible if the necessary funding can be secured. This will only happen if the Canadian public, and in particular the national leadership, are convinced of the need and understand this level of funding is necessary, indeed essential, investment.

Success can only be achieved if there is broad political support for these significant expenditures, however, the RCN can only work within DND guardrails. An outside body working to educate our political leadership, of all flavours, is essential to success.

At present there does not appear to be any organization capable of educating Canadians. Canada and the RCN need an independent, arms-length organization that can fight this fight. We have accepted this as our key role — this is our reason for being — but we are not quite ready for prime time.

This fight needs to be fought at two levels—bottom up and top down. Our thrust at the grassroots level, aimed at educating Canadians across the country, must be Branch based. It must educate not only voters but particularly local political leaders. It is the local citizens involved in the political process who should be targeted first. Educating them provides a base which is in direct contact with elected members of parliament. Local MPs in turn can take this message to their caucus in Ottawa. In many communities these influential individuals belong to a local service organization. We have started this process via our OUTREACH program led by Richard Archer [see: "NAC Outreach" pp. 11-12]. Much needs to be done to achieve success—how can you help?

At the National level we expect our Naval Affairs initiatives led by Dan Sing will be key in leading the Canadian political and industrial leadership to understand how a

capable and effective navy is essential to our national well-being. A key group has been meeting regularly to explore how we can best construct and deliver our message. We look forward to the publication of articles in the next few months and the opportunity to educate the new government, whatever party may win, starting in November.

This will only be possible if we have a strong and dynamic association. As Admiral Norman highlights [see: p.3], we have begun to turn the corner on membership. Not only are numbers finally increasing—although modestly—but we see younger individuals from a wider range of Canadian society joining.

In my *Starshell* column of Summer 2013: <http://navalassoc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SSFromtheBridge-Summer2013.pdf>

I identified a number of suggested conditions for Branch growth. We need to make it far easier for those we need to attract to join and fully appreciate—to 'belong.' Experience has shown that if meetings are held in the evening and take place in a naval wardroom/mess, serving members can easily attend and civilian members can begin to relate to our traditions and culture.

Today people expect to join on-line and receive notices and services on-line. Bob Bush, our national webmaster, has done a great job in building a modern website which supports these capabilities and has offered his services to Branches, including hosting Branch sites on the service. I encourage Branches to take Bob up on his offer—again experience shows this makes a difference.

Person to person contact has been proven time and again to be the most effective recruitment tool. We will see a significant improvement if, as part of daily life, every individual member works to educate those with whom they come in contact as to the importance of a capable and effective Navy. Bottom line—our Navy's funding requirements are eye-watering, and unless Canadians understand spending the necessary money is critical to our country's future, we will not have the Navy we need. Education is the key. We accept this as our mission. We can only be successful if we build a strong and enduring organization. ***Work starts at the Branch ... let's do it!***

Yours aye,

