

March – April 2017 • Volume 32, Issue 2

NAC VI MEMBERS TOUR 443 SQUADRON



By John Webber

Twelve NAC VI members took the opportunity to tour 443 Maritime Helicopter Squadron's new 215,280 square foot hangar near the Victoria International Airport on Feb. 24.

The tour was organized by our Treasurer, Peter Bey, himself a helicopter pilot.

The facility, named Arundel Castle, opened in April 2015 at a cost of about \$155 million. It's now fully functional for maintaining CH-124 Sikorsky Sea King helicopters with a crew of more than 250 technicians, aircrew and support staff.

Captain Yujin Lee was our tour guide. The building is spacious and should handle all the maintenance required for Canada's future CH-148 Cyclone helicopters.

The first part of the tour was the pilot equipment maintenance and testing area. This was followed by the engine maintenance area. I was impressed with the size of the 1,500 shaft horsepower engines on the Sea King. They are not much bigger than a standard car engine. The Sea King has two engines, one for the propellers and one for the hydraulics and generator.

The flight operations area was not part of the tour because of its high level of security.

Seven of us finished off the tour with lunch at the Mary's Bleue Moon Cafe near the airport.



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LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS AND INPUT

I had the pleasure last week of attending Ceremonial Divisions at Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps (RCSCC) Beacon Hill where I was honoured to present, on your behalf, \$500 to Cadet CPO2 Erin Lawless to help with her expenses to attend the 100th anniversary activities at Vimy Ridge.

Since then, a number of you have come forward with further funds to supplement that original grant. These will be presented in the next few weeks. It goes without saying that if any of you would like to support this worthwhile endeavor please contact me. Erin has offered to attend one of our meetings when she returns to share her experience with us.

While visiting the corps, I was pleased to note the dedication to the Navy, and its

traditions, by all the cadets on parade. This caused me to reflect on all the other similar corps here on the island, in British Columbia and across Canada. Just considering our island and all the corps, both RCSC and NLC here, this would be a formidable base to take our message of support for Canada's Navy forward. In the immediate future, we will be reaching out to this group. If any of you have connections here and would be willing to help with this initiative, please contact me and we will take it forward.

Naval Affairs Plan

You may have noticed a new initiative being lead by Commodore (retired) Dan Sing of NAC National in the latest national newsletter. Dan is looking to build a national group to build and act on a Naval



Bill Conconi

Affairs Plan for NAC. He is especially looking for one or two people interested in this area from outside Ottawa. If this is something of interest to you, please contact him directly for more information at ddcc4@sympatico.ca.

Spring Events

As spring approaches, we have a number of events planned. In addition to our

regular luncheons, now being held at the Royal Victoria Yacht Club, we are planning a number of other events that will connect us with serving personnel, utilizing the Gunroom at Naval Fleet School (Pacific). While allowing us a chance to meet with younger officers under training, these events will also be open to all members interested. These will have a more "Naval Affairs" focus. If you have some thoughts on what may be topics of interest, either for our luncheons or for our Gunroom-style presentations, please contact me or any member of the NAC VI Executive.

As I am about to press send on this message, I look out my window and the snow continues to fall; roll on spring.

*Yours aye,
Bill Conconi*

NEW LOCATION!

UPCOMING LUNCHEONS

March 23, 2017
Speaker: David Longdale
The Offshore Patrol Vessel as an option for Canada, going forward. As Canada moves to its next generation of surface vessels, is there a complimentary possibility to support the transition?

April 27, 2017
Speaker: Sean Wheeler, RCMP Marine detachment
RCMP Marine operations on Canada's West Coast
An overview of operations and challenges faced by the RCMP Marine detachment.

Luncheons are held at the **Royal Victoria Yacht Club, 3475 Ripon Road** (Cadboro Bay) starting at 11:30 a.m. Lunch will be served at 12:15 p.m. Members are asked to confirm their attendance with Peter Bey, 250-652-2225.

NAC VI SUPPORTS CADET TRAVEL TO VIMY RIDGE FOR CENTENARY EVENTS



Cadet CPO2 Erin Lawless receives a cheque for \$500 from Bill Conconi. The funds were presented on behalf of NAC VI to help her cover the costs of traveling to Europe in April to attend the 100 year anniversary ceremony of the Battle at Vimy Ridge.

About Cadet CPO2 Erin Lawless

Cadet CPO2 Lawless has been with the sea cadet program at RCSCC Beacon Hill for the past five years. She is currently the Corps Buffer, Chief of Training and the Mess President. In these roles, she provides direction and leadership to both the cadet instructors and trainees.

She is also a Staff Cadet at HMCS Quadra. In 2016, she was a Boatswain of Patrol Craft Training Orca.

In addition to these roles, Cadet CPO2 Lawless volunteers with Navy League Cadet Corps RH Falls where she provides leadership and instruction during training nights. She is on the Sea Cadet Advisory Panel, actively working to improve the sea cadet program locally, regionally and nationally.

Cadet CPO2 Lawless was selected as the top sea cadet on Vancouver Island in 2015 and 2016 and was awarded the Navy League of Canada Medal of Excellence.

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HMCS ORIOLE SETS SAIL FOR THE EAST COAST

HMCS Oriole's upcoming sail is one of the farthest in its 96-year history.

Two weeks into March, the 31-metre sailing ketch, with 20 eager sailors on board, will leave Esquimalt Harbour with the compass set for Charlottetown Harbour in Prince Edward Island.

The plan is for *Oriole* to glide into the East Coast harbour in late-June after sailing more than 10,000 nautical miles, (16,000 kilometres) in time for Canada's 150th Anniversary celebrations.

The original crew of 20 will change throughout the trip so that 40 or 50 different sailors will have made part of the trip.

The course will take *Oriole* down the Pacific Coast and through the Panama Canal and Caribbean. It will include stops in the United States, Mexico, Jamaica, and Bermuda for the Tall Ships Bermuda 2017 festival on June 1. Part of the festival is a regatta, a series of races including a trans-Atlantic race to Bermuda and on to Boston, Quebec, and finally Halifax.

The final leg of *Oriole's* journey will take her into the Gulf of the St. Lawrence for Canada 150 celebrations in Charlottetown, followed by a variety of short visits throughout the Maritimes and Quebec.

Oriole will remain on the East Coast for a refit next winter and return to Esquimalt next August.

The ship is currently undergoing significant equipment renewal with replacement of both generators and its water maker, plus establishment of an Internet connection and a significant rebuild of the navigation suite.

DND AWARDS MAJOR CONTRACT FOR "B" JETTY DEMOLITION

The Department of National Defence has awarded a \$55.45 million contract to Pomerleau Inc. from Surrey, BC, for the demolition of the existing "B" Jetty at HMC Dockyard Esquimalt and preparing the site for future rebuilding work.

The existing jetties, "A" and "B", were originally designed for ships that were smaller and lighter than today's modern Canadian Patrol Frigates. As such, they are not long enough or deep enough to accommodate modern ships.

The new docking facilities will be optimal for the berthing of Canada's modern frigates and for newly designed vessels joining the fleet between 2018 and the mid-2040s.

Following the demolition of "B" Jetty, the rebuilding of a new "B" Jetty will begin. The demolition and rebuilding of "A" Jetty will begin once "B" jetty is operational.

BREAKWATER INSTALLED IN ESQUIMALT HARBOUR

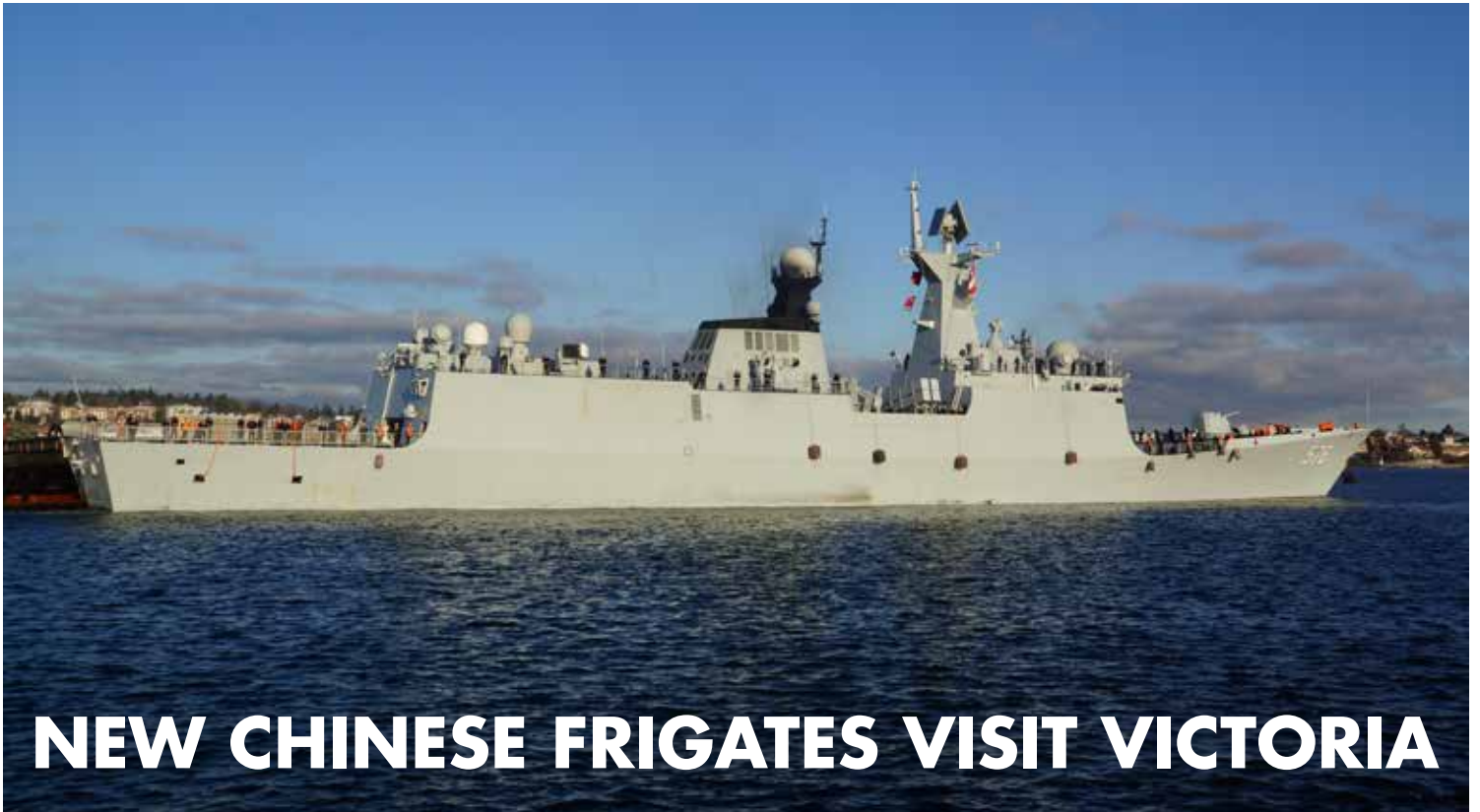
A 400-foot long, 30-foot wide floating breakwater has been deployed to the east of D Jetty in Colwood to provide a buffer from large, wind-driven waves and swells that are common on Esquimalt Harbour's west side.

The west side of the harbour will be a temporary home for the Pacific fleet's smaller vessels as the A/B jetty construction project goes ahead.

The foam-filled concrete structure, which includes multiple ballast tanks, was designed by marine construction company Blue Water Systems Ltd., of Delta, B.C. and was delivered to Esquimalt via tugboat in early December 2016.

Personnel from POESB, Fleet Diving Unit (Pacific), and a team of riggers from Fleet Maintenance Facility attached the four pieces of the breakwater together prior to its deployment, with the assistance of the Auxiliary Fleet's steam-powered crane barge YD250.

The breakwater rests approximately 14 feet below the waterline and just 18 inches above the surface, held in place by 26 concrete anchors and chains.



NEW CHINESE FRIGATES VISIT VICTORIA

Chinese Frigate Daqing.

Article and photos by John Webber

I was excited when two type 54A Chinese navy frigates and a replenishment ship docked in Victoria in December.

They were welcomed by our navy and the local Chinese community. Each ship was given a Christmas tree.

These new ships have been rated the tenth most powerful frigates in the world by defencyclopedia.com. This rating was determined by an overall analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each vessel.

People's Liberation Army frigates Daqing and Yancheng, accompanied by supply ship Taihu, were bristling with antennas, showing that electronics are a very important part of a modern navy.

Using mainly Russian style electronics and weapons, the Chinese frigates are about the same length as Canada's Halifax class frigates but carry a larger 76mm main gun, two 11-barrel close-in weapon systems guns and 32 vertical missile launch system cells.



They were just as interested in me, as I was in them.

They are more a destroyer than a frigate; however, they are only 700 tons heavier than the Halifax class.

The PLA approach seems to be to upgrade onboard equipment as it is designed, so the newest frigates will have the latest equipment.

China has more than 20 of these frigates, with more being built at a rate of about one every 40 days.

During my tour it was interesting that when they scanned for metal ob-

jects in my pockets (I had lots), they did not check to see if the metal objects were weapons.

It was a top deck tour, entering via the flight deck and leaving via a forward gangway.

The gangways from the dock to the ship were very slippery, which I found unusual, but the excellent handrails saved me from falling.

The corridor between the hanger deck and the foc's'le was neat and uncluttered with an aluminum handrail.

Unlike on our frigates, their corridor was extremely neat, well lit and had very little equipment attached to the bulkheads.

The frigate had almost no rust showing. They must use better paint or have a daily painting party.

I am sure they did not expect an old guy like me to take over 500 photos, but, it's my hobby.

All my photographs of the arrival ceremony and the Chinese ships can be found on my Flickr account: www.flickr.com/photos/135713236@N05/albums.



HMCS ST. JOHN'S WRAPS UP DEPLOYMENT TO THE BLACK SEA

After three weeks in the Black Sea, *HMCS St. John's* is carrying on with its seven-month deployment in the Mediterranean as part of Operation Reassurance.

While there, *St. John's* conducted Exercise Sea Shield, which was a significant achievement in its current deployment. The frigate, which was recently upgraded,

integrated seamlessly into a task group of Turkish, Bulgarian, Romanian, American and Spanish ships, aircraft and submarines.

The exercise had a variety of serials that worked every department on board the ship: manoeuvres, replenishment at sea approaches, combined anti-submarine and air defence exercises, maritime

interdiction and vessel boarding, search and rescue of a stricken submarine, and communications via radio, flashing lights and flags.

St. John's also made several port visits in the region and crew members took the opportunity to volunteer at a local children's shelter Constanta.

MCDVs DEPLOY TO THE AFRICAN WEST COAST FOR EXERCISE NEPTUNE TRIDENT

On Feb. 18, Halifax-based Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels *HMC Ships Summerside* and *Moncton* sailed for West Africa to participate in Neptune Trident 17-01. The exercise includes engagements with West African nations to support joint training and foster relationships in the Gulf of Guinea region.

While deployed, *Summerside* and *Moncton*, and a detachment of personnel from the Maritime Tactical Operations Group (MTOG) will also participate in Obangame Express 2017, an at-sea maritime training event led by U.S. Naval Forces Africa.

MTOG, which includes specially trained teams prepared to confront a variety of threats in high-risk maritime environments, will work with regional partners to support joint training for maritime interdiction. These operations aim to delay, disrupt, or destroy criminal or enemy forces or supplies at sea.

Obangame Express 2017, taking place in the Gulf of Guinea, is designed to improve cooperation among participating nations in order to increase maritime safety and security in the region. African partners in the exercise include Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo, Cabo Verde, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe, and Togo.



CROWS NEST TURNS 75

2017 marks the 75th Anniversary of the Sea-Going Officers' Club (a.k.a. the "Crows Nest") near the St. John's, Newfoundland, waterfront.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, there will be several special events, including a naval mess dinner at CFS St. John's on Saturday, Oct. 21, 2017.

This falls in the middle of the 2017 NAC National Conference, being held in St. John's from Oct. 19-21. See page 10 for details about this year's conference.

TESSIER TO COMMAND SECOND ARCTIC SHIP

By Peter Mallett, Lookout Newspaper

A few days before Christmas break, Commander Michele Tessier was offered a major command coup.

In a meeting with Commodore Jeff Zwick, Commander Canadian Fleet Pacific, she was offered the captain's chair aboard Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Margaret Brooke, the Royal Canadian Navy's second Harry DeWolf-Class Arctic Offshore Patrol Vessel (AOPV).

"I was humbled to hear the news to be honest; it was a really emotional moment for me," she says. "You're lucky to get one command at sea, so to be selected for a second is quite an honour."

Cdr Tessier commanded *HMCS Nanaimo* from 2010 to 2013, which she says was the highlight of her career.

HMCS Margaret Brooke is currently under construction at Irving Shipbuilding in Halifax. This brand-new class of ship honours Canadian naval heroes, with this particular ship paying tribute to Lieutenant-Commander Margaret Brooke, a Second World War nursing sister. This marked the first time an RCN vessel was named after a living Canadian woman. (LCdr Brooke subsequently passed away in 2016 at the age of 100.)

The rollout of the AOPVs is expected to start in 2018, and Cdr Tessier will begin her new job that summer to prepare for command.

Her appointment was determined by the Naval Succession Planning Board, a body made up of senior RCN leadership that determines operational command positions.

The graduate of Memorial University's English literature program grew up in Grand Bank, NL. She is the granddaughter of a fishing trawler captain, and she says the salt water is in her blood.

Cdr Tessier joined the Naval Reserve in 1996 at HMCS Cabot in St. John's,



Commander Michele Tessier

and completed basic officer training at the now closed Canadian Forces Officer Candidate School in Chilliwack, B.C. Her résumé is peppered with notable appointments including commanding officer of Naval Reserve Division HMCS Griffon in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and Commander Coastal Forces Pacific, her current post.

Once deployed, the new AOPVs will help enforce Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic, Pacific and Atlantic by providing armed sea-borne surveillance and response in Canada's Exclusive Economic Zone.

"It's starting from scratch with a new class of ship that is bigger than the Kingston Class and heavier than the Halifax Class frigates, which is exciting," Cdr Tessier says.

The 103-metre diesel-electric propulsion vessels will have a complement of 65 personnel. Features of the vessel include helicopter capability; Polar Class 5+ ice breaker hull equipped with bow thrusters, enabling the ship to manoeuvre or berth without tug assistance and operate in medium first-year ice up to

one metre thickness; a modern bridge navigation system; an automated remote-controlled 25mm gun; and a large vehicle bay capable of storing pickup trucks, ATVs and snowmobiles.

To enhance her understanding of conditions in Canada's far north, Cdr Tessier, along with Cdr Corey Gleason, Commanding Officer of *HMCS Harry DeWolf*, will join the Canadian Coast Guard in the Arctic this summer, and again in 2018 for Arctic navigation and operations training. Some areas of focus will include Arctic-specific climate, currents and methods of operating a vessel in water obstructed by ice.

"While I have very basic ice navigation training and experience sailing in Alaskan waters, the RCN doesn't have a lot of Arctic expertise," says Cdr Tessier. "It's a little daunting because I have so much to learn, not only about the Arctic component, but all the other pieces as well. I'm looking forward to getting on board with Cdr Gleason in 2018 to start my "Know-Your-Ship" book and become familiar with our newest class of ship."

REDESIGNED COMMAND BADGE FOR RCN

By Darlene Blakely, Crowsnest

The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) has adopted a redesigned command badge that better reflects both the current RCN make-up and its traditional identity.

The original badge was adopted in 1968 with the stand-up of Maritime Command after unification. It has been out of date since 2011 when the historic names of the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) three services – the RCN, the Canadian Army (CA) and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) – were restored.

“Like the return to our historic name, the redesigned command badge recognizes our heritage and many years of proud RCN service,” says Dr. Rich Gimblett, the RCN’s Command Historian. “It takes its core inspiration from the pre-unification command badge.”

The redesigned command badge incorporates the following modifications:

The background light “air force” blue has been replaced with dark navy blue, which matches the pre-unification badge and better reflects the RCN’s traditional blue;

The central device (anchor) has been flattened to reflect the device found on the pre-unification badge and for consistency with the anchor found on the CAF badge. Also, the eagle has been removed to better



Old RCN Command Badge



New RCN Command Badge

reflect the RCN’s current makeup.

The motto, “Ready Aye Ready”, already translated for common use in French as “Toujours là, toujours prêts”, has been translated to the Latin “Parati Vero Parati” for consistency with the army and air force badges. The English and French translations will be used below the badge where appropriate.

The redesigned badge retains the standard CAF command badge style with a central circular rope surround and maple leaves clustered at the bottom.

And while the RCAF design element of

the eagle has been removed from the new badge, Dr. Gimblett says it will continue to be a central part of the Canadian Naval Ensign (flag) flown aboard warships.

“The eagle is inappropriate on the command badge as the RCN does not maintain an air branch within the command anymore,” explains Dr. Gimblett. “However, continued incorporation of the eagle on the Canadian Naval Ensign is entirely appropriate because our warships are CAF assets and the embarked RCAF air detachments historically have been, and are expected to remain, critical elements of their combat capability.”

VETERANS HEALTH RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS

Military members facing challenges due to physical and mental injuries or the social challenges of reintegrating into family and community life must receive support based on the best evidence possible resulting from research from the best and brightest Canada has to offer.

The Royal Canadian Legion is awarding an annual entrance scholarship of \$30,000 (\$15,000/year for 2 years) to a Master’s level student specializing in research related to Veterans and their families.

The Legion is now accepting applications for the 2017 scholarship until May 31, 2017.

More Canadian research is needed to address the needs over the life course of those who serve or have served our nation.

The Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) and Wounded Warriors Canada (WWC) are currently awarding one scholarship annually to a PhD student who demonstrates excellence in research issues relevant to military members, veterans and families while also exhibiting potential for a high impact research career. Students will be funded \$18,000 each year for two years.

Applications for the 2017 scholarship will be accepted until July 1.

For inquiries, please contact: julie.burch@cimvhr.ca
More about these scholarships at cimvhr.ca/en/cimvhr-scholarships

VICE CDS TEMPORARILY RELIEVED OF DUTY

Adm Mark Norman was suspended from his position as Vice Chief of the Defence Staff on Jan. 9 amid speculation that he leaked classified information about the Liberal government's shipbuilding program to a private company.

Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Jon Vance offered little information about the circumstances surrounding his decision to suspend VAdm Norman.

Though no charges have been laid against him yet, VAdm Norman has retained Toronto criminal lawyer Marie Henein, who in 2016 defended former CBC radio host Jian Ghomeshi from a series of sexual assault charges.

Several days after Norman's suspension, Vice Admiral Ron Lloyd, head of the Royal Canadian Navy, was named acting vice chief of the



VAdm Mark Norman

defence staff.

Gen Vance has not indicated how long VAdm Lloyd will maintain his two roles or when information will be made public about the details of Norman's removal.

NAC 2017 CONFERENCE

The Naval Association of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador Branch in cooperation with the Crow's Nest Officers' Club, is pleased to announce that the 2017 National Conference and Annual General Meeting will take place Oct. 19-22, in St. John's, NL.

The National Conference will be a one-day event hosted by the Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University on Friday, Oct. 20. This year's theme is "The North Atlantic: Past and Present". Further details will be posted on the NAC website as they are available.

The AGM will be held on Saturday, Oct. 21 at HMCS Cabot.

Rooms have been reserved at the Murray Premises Hotel/St. John's Executive Suites, 5 Beck's Cove, St. John's, NL, A1C 6H1, phone (709)-738-7773 or (866)-738-7773, www.murraypremiseshotel.com. The group block is under the name Naval Association of Canada and delegates should ask for this block when calling. Complimentary continental deluxe breakfast is offered along with complimentary parking and Wi-Fi.

Further details on timings, registration, conference program will be provided when registration opens in May. Visit the NAC website, www.navalassoc.ca, for further details on these events. For more information, email Conference Chair Ed Williams at edgarwilliams@nl.rogers.com



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

USS ENTERPRISE DECOMMISSIONED



The U.S. Navy's first nuclear-powered aircraft-carrier USS Enterprise was decommissioned Feb. 3, 56 years after first entering service.

In 51 years of service, Enterprise deployed 25 times and participated in every major conflict since the Cuban Missile Crisis. The ship has been homeported in both Alameda, California, and Norfolk, Virginia., and conducted operations in every region of the world.

The next ship to bear the name Enterprise will be the third Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CVN 80).



A CANADIAN OPV STORY NEVER TOLD

By David Longdale

In the early 1990s the B.C. Government, through BC Trade, encouraged the province's marine sector to combine its resources to compete internationally. The outcome of this initiative was the formation of Western Canada Marine Group (WCMG) and I was appointed president.

This joint venture included 10 leading B.C. marine companies, all of which had international experience.

The first project we pursued was an international request for proposal (RFP) issued by the Government of Mauritius for a 74 metre Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) for deep sea patrols in the Indian Ocean. We were competing with established naval constructors from the UK, Germany, France, Netherlands, and USA. Shipyards in Canada at the time were not in good shape, so we decided to link up with the Chilean Naval Shipyard ASMAR to bid the project with WCMG being the prime contractor.

We had to present our bid in Mauritius with the other shortlisted competitors and spent 10 days finalizing details, which also included negotiations with ASMAR representatives. We received strong support from both federal and provincial governments throughout the process.

The process was intense and we decided to use the Canadian World War II Corvette history as background and the mothership (required) CCGS Leonard J. Cowley (same LTB ratio as we bid), which had been designed by WCMG member company, Polar Design.

We received strong support from both federal and provincial governments throughout the process.

The Mauritian investigating team included Indian Naval Officers, who commanded the Mauritius Coast Guard (MCG) vessels; a Portuguese former naval officer; Mauritian government officials; and Canadian Coast Guard Officers. They all arrived in St. John's, Newfoundland, in February 1994, greeted by a major blizzard and with our reference vessel, the Cowley, out on patrol.

A breakthrough occurred during a visit to the Royal Canadian Navy Offi-

cers' Mess, the Crow's Nest. The Senior Indian Naval Officer in the Mauritius delegation had trained in India under a Canadian Officer from St. John's. Though the officer wasn't in town at the time, this remembrance resulted in much celebration and shields exchanged. Then the Portuguese former naval officer saw a picture of Naval Sail Training Vessel "SAGRES", which he had sailed on during a visit to St. John's. He remembered most of the pubs on Water Street and so more celebration ensued.

The next morning, the Cowley returned from an incident-packed patrol for refueling and a quick crew change. So with rather thick heads, we were welcomed on board and proceeded to the fueling dock. The crew put on a great show of hospitality with more celebration.

We then left St. John's for Vancouver, where our guests went up to Grouse Mountain. For some, it was the first time they had walked in snow. BC Trade did a major PR job over lunch and Vancouver's bespoke spots drew much praise. We had managed to impress our potential clients. Finally, we visited some of the participating shareholders facilities, which gave both us and them much better insight into

what each was expecting.

Four months later, we received a Letter of Intent from the Government of Mauritius, subject to final negotiation. First, we had to nail down ASMAR. Dealing with an experienced admiral was good, but none of the officers had any commercial experience so it took two weeks in Vancouver to finalize everything.

Then we headed to Mauritius for final negotiations and contract signing. We signed the contract with the Mauritius Government in the presence of the Canadian Ambassador for the region who flew in from Tanzania through a cyclone.

Next stop was the Naval Headquarters in Valparaiso, Chile, where we signed a contract with ASMAR on March 24, 1994. It was a major achievement for Chile as a Southern Hemisphere developing country. It was well received there, but got no publicity in Canada.

All material and equipment was supplied to Chile from Vancouver and more than 100 B.C. companies were involved. WCMG provided the design, engineering and project management at ASMAR shipyard in Talcahuano.

The relationship was, for the most part, very good. The arrangement was a learning process for ASMAR, but they were fully committed. Construction and outfit was completed on schedule and the quality good by any standard.

The vessel we produced, MCGS VIGILANT, launched on Dec. 6, 1995, at midnight to take advantage of a high tide. There was a large band, much goose stepping and stirring anthems. The Canadian Ambassador to Chile led the Canadian delegation. Admirals and the Minister of Defense for Chile spoke. The whole event was transmitted live via satellite to Malaysia where the ASEAN Naval Conference and Exhibition was being held. It was followed the next day by an elaborate ceremony during which the Mauritius delegation blessed the vessel.

A team of 22 Mauritian Coast Guard crew and an Indian Naval Commander (he is now Vice Admiral SPS Cheema

FOC-in-C Southern Naval Command, Indian Navy) were trained on the vessel by WCMG and ASMAR, which was supported by the Canadian International Development Agency.

Although outside the contract, WCMG agreed to have key technicians on board for the trip to Port Louie, Mauritius.



The design of MCGS Vigilant was based on Canadian corvettes from the Second World War (HMCS Regina above) and Canadian Coast Guard Vessel Leonard J. Cowley.



The vessel departed in July 1996, stopping in Punta Arenas for fuel and to release the ASMAR support team before rounding Cape Horn. They experienced heavy weather for much of the voyage, which proved the hull design. They arrived in Simon's Town, South Africa after rounding the Cape of Good Hope where additional equipment was added to the OPV before they continued on to Mauritius. The voyage took more than seven weeks including the stops. Sea trials ensued in Mauritius and final acceptance was signed September 1996.

The VIGILANT was the most sophisticated and largest vessel the MCG had and maintenance was an issue through most of its life. We tried to address this, but they didn't have the funding to support

it properly. In hindsight, a maintenance program should have been provided as there is little support or expertise in the MCG.

This exercise with WCMG proved Canada can be a leader on the international scene if given minimal constraints and strong government support.

Today, naval warfare is going through major changes, and with the ever increasing threat from swarming drone attacks from both above and below the sea, a low cost OPV platform may be the way of the future that harkens back to Canada's great Corvette history. They are low cost, can be built fast and are easy to modify. High BtL ratio provides excellent sea keepers, and they have a long range.

What happened to WCMG and the OPV design?

WCMG went on to win a contract with the Irish Navy and we partnered with AP Appledore (now part of Babcock) Shipyard of North Devon, UK, for the construction.

At this stage, Polar Design, a key member of WCMG, was sold to European owners who only wanted to perform the design and engineering and not take on the construction risk. As a result, WCMG was disbanded.

Since then, Appledore has built or has on order six OPVs based on the original VIGILANT concept. This OPV design evolution continues in Vancouver through the foreign owned VARD Design office in East Vancouver. Many of the WCMG team are still there. Their current OPV designs are now in service with the New Zealand Navy and have been selected for the new 100m USCG Ocean Cutter to be built at Eastern Marine in Florida. VARD (Part of the Fincanteri Group, Italy) also designed the RCN Arctic OPS and CCG Icebreaker to be built in Vancouver.

Hear more about Canada and the future of Offshore Patrol Vessels when David speaks at the March 23 NAC VI luncheon. See page 2 of this newsletter for details.

SIGN UP FOR MY VAC ACCOUNT

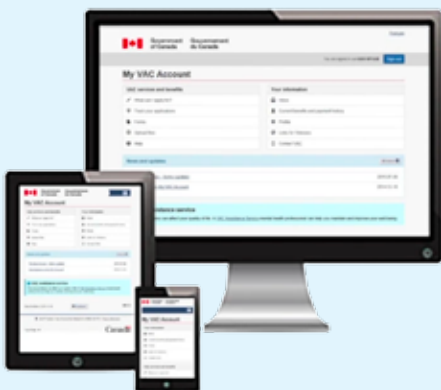
If you receive benefits from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), be sure to sign up for My VAC Account for quick online access to information on your benefits file. My VAC Account is a simple and secure online service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. With this service, you can:

- learn about VAC benefits and services
- apply online for benefits and services
- upload documents to support your applications
- track the status of your applications
- view a summary of your benefits
- sign up for direct deposit or change your banking information
- update your personal information and communicate directly with VAC staff through secure messaging

My VAC Account is available to Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police members, and family members receiving benefits from VA C.

My VAC Account is continually enhanced to provide more features and improve service.

Register for a My VAC Account at www.veterans.gc.ca/myvac account.



VETERANS CORNER

GOVERNMENT REVIEW OFFERS HOPE TO VETERANS

By Rod Hughes

The Liberal government's election platform promised a fundamental change to the relationship with Veterans; specifically to "ensure that veterans receive the respect, support, care, and economic opportunities they deserve".

The Minister of Veteran Affairs was given an open letter that established objectives for Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), with the first point being to: "Work with the MND to reduce complexity, overhaul service delivery, and strengthen partnerships between Veterans Affairs and National Defence". You can read all the points at: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-veterans-affairs-and-associate-minister-national-defence-mandate-letter#sthash.dfv00x1z.dpuf>.

A committee established to carry out this mandate is titled the "VAC Service Delivery Review". Details of the review are on the VAC website: www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/about-us/department-officials/minister/briefing/service-delivery-review.

A significant element of the review was consultation and dialogue with Veterans and Veterans' groups. I was asked to participate in the Veterans Consultation phase and attended a small local meeting last May as the NAC-VI representative, along with other group representatives and Royal Canadian Legion representatives.

The VAC team led the discussion, which included a broad range of issues and levels of detail that impressed me. Everyone agreed there are many good programs, but there is also a wide divergence in awareness of those programs within the Veteran community. It was also noted that there is a lack of proficiency in delivery of these programs.

The re-establishment of lifelong pensions as an option for injured veterans

was wholeheartedly supported and, should it be implemented, would go a long way in rectifying injured veterans' concerns.

VAC Case Officers are currently handling caseloads at a ratio of about 50 clients to one staff member. The government's goal is to get that down to about 25 clients per case officer. Re-opening the nine Veterans Affairs service offices previously closed, and hiring more service delivery staff should achieve this goal.

The most significant recommendation that germinated within the discussion group was to enhance the existing relationship that VAC enjoys with veterans groups, and to expand the activities and service delivery assistance the Legion already has under the formal Legion/VAC Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). For details of this MOU, see pages 5 and 6 of the Royal Canadian Legion's Service Officer's Manual: www.legion.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SOHandbook2013_e.pdf.

The group recommended that, given the Legion's footprint in most communities and their existing well-developed Service Officer program, the Legion remains an ideal institution to help facilitate the awareness and availability of VAC programs.

Another major item discussed was a seamless transition from being a serving member to becoming a Veteran; this was strongly supported. Potentially, instead of a break, a seamless transition would be put in place from the CAF support network to the retirement support network that's already in place for members leaving the Royal Canadian Navy.

Whether this review translates into positive change awaits the test of time, but I'm cautiously optimistic. The real trick will be the political will to marshal the resources to transform a plan into reality.