Published quarterly for distribution to the members of **RUSI-VI.** Suggestions are encouraged.

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Volume 57, 4th Quarter 2025

RUSI VI

To promote national defence and security issues through discussion and engagement

Newsletter of the Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island

The Royal United Services Institute of Vancouver Island is a member of the Conference of Defence Associations. The CDA is the oldest and most influential advocacy group in Canada's defence community, consisting of associations from all parts of the country.

The CDA expresses its ideas and opinions with a view to influencing government security and defence policy. It is a non-partisan, independent, and non-profit organization.

November 2025

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Speakers and Activities for the Fall Session

November RUSI Meeting

PLEASE NOTE: the regular second Wednesday of the month meeting has been moved to the first Wednesday in November on the 5th, to align with Remembrance Week

Wed 05 Nov - Presentation by Yvonne Van Ruskenveld of the Old Cemeteries Society on *A Victoria Hospital Goes to War; General Hospital No. 5* - (WWI).

Sat 8 Nov 19:30 Concert of Remembrance – Dave Dunnet Theatre.
Band of the 5th (BC) Field Regt and the Canadian College of Preforming Arts (CCPA)
A specially crafted evening of pieces by the 5th Band and a CCPA multi - discipline production by these soon to be professional singers and actors.

Sun 9 Nov 14:00 God's Acre military cemetery tour with RUSI VI member John Azar

Fri 05 Dec 2025 All Day - A Seminar open to interested parties on General Sir Arthur Currie, being held in the appropriately named Currie Room at the Bay Street Armoury. See article in Newsletter for registration.

December RUSI Meeting

Sun 14 Dec 25 - RUSI VI Christmas Afternoon Social –and Bar Service. A Presentation on Military Mascots.

January RUSI Meeting

Wed 14 Jan 26 - Gary Beels - Submarine Technology Consultant

President's Message

Welcome to yet another excellent newsletter containing meticulously researched content on topical subject matter - thanks to the efforts of the editor/publisher Craig Cotter! Reading of the General Sir Arthur Currie's legacy and his leadership style put me in mind of the subject of a staff college paper I wrote on the leadership style of Major General Bert Hoffmeister as a field commander during the Second World War, who in Jack Granatstein's opinion, was "the best Canadian fighting general of the war" - and the fact that both were the products of the Canadian Militia force. Currie's leadership style set the pattern for a very practical 'Canadian' approach that proved its effectiveness in both these officers as wartime field commanders. The 150th commemoration of the birth of Currie this December will provide an appropriate opportunity to delve into the details of his life, career, and legacy.

The other items of the newsletter provide a 'deep dive' into salient issues of modernization and adaptation facing the service branches of the Canadian Armed Forces in the context of an awakening public recognition of challenges in the current and prospective defence and security environment. Of note, is the observation made in the Borys article as to the essential factor of national will in meeting those challenges. As stated in the recent presentation by Robert Baines, president of the NATO Association of Canada (NAOC); effective public communications will be critical in maintaining that national will. RUSI VI and allied associations, such as the NAOC, will have a role to play and must seek to expand their public impact to do so. In that regard, you may have noticed that some younger participants have attended our events so far this fall. This is the product of engagement with UVic student associations such as the Model UN and the NAOC's NATO Youth CA. We are also cooperating with the Canadian International Council (CIC) Victoria, as in the 9 October event, and continue our liaison with the Naval Association of Canada branch as examples of reaching out to a wider audience base.

Finally, a note on our internal communications vehicles. This newsletter is the flagship in that regard in providing in-depth content on items of interest in a high- quality format. Emails titled Despatches providing timely updates regarding scheduled and ad hoc events, activities, and other transient information from various sources are a recently added means of communication while supplementing the Newsletter. This is in the interest of improving our interactive and informal communications with our membership.

Paul Seguna, CD, President RUSI Vancouver Island

Currie and the Canadian army in WW1

Victor Skaarup & Craig Cotter 5th (BC) Artillery Regt Museum and Archives

As we commemorate the birth date of Sir Aurthur Currie on December 5th, his 150th Birthday, it is important to reflect on his enduring legacy that of making Canadian soldiers the best in the world.

The authors have drawn from the texts of many authors to produce this synopsis. They claim no authorship.

There is no doubt that General Sir Arthur Currie is regarded almost unanimously by Canadian Military Historians as Canada's greatest fighting leader. He led the 2nd Brigade through the gas attacks at Ypres in 1915, commanded the First Canadian Division through the taking of Vimy Ridge in April 1917 and he commanded the Canadian Corps, certainly one of the premier formations in the British Expeditionary Force.

Sir Julian Byng, a British general, was the Canadian Corps commander in WW1 from 1915 to 1917. He groomed Currie as his replacement. When Byng was promoted to army commander and based on Currie's Canadians having successfully stormed Vimy Ridge in April 1917, Currie was appointed in June to head the Canadian Corps. The first and only Canadian soldier to occupy that post, Currie proved an excellent corps commander.

Under his command, the Canadians cemented their reputation as an elite assault formation, with an unbroken string of major victories in 1917-1918 that included Hill 70, Passchendaele, Amiens, Arras, and the Canal du Nord. He is widely considered to have been among the finest generals of the war.

Militia Officer to Division Command

Victoria's Arthur Currie was not charming, well-connected nor well educated. In an era of wiry men with distinguished moustaches, Currie was doughy and clean shaven. Few would encounter him without mentioning his enormous girth. In the words of one author, Currie was "embarrassingly unassuming in appearance and bearing."

Currie's extracurricular activities as a member of the local Artillery Militia would unwittingly place him in good position for activities to follow in Europe. Joining the Canadian Militia in the 1890s was akin to joining a yacht or golf club; it was mainly a good place to find business contacts and secure dinner invitations. But Currie ended

up taking the Militia far more seriously than most. He poured over military textbooks and absorbed every class or exercise the military could serve up. He would note later "When some of my associates were playing lawn tennis or swinging golf clubs, I was at the armouries or on the rifle ranges with the boys."

A militia officer and schoolteacher, Currie had never commanded anything larger than a regiment at the outbreak of war in 1914. He commanded the 5th (BC) Garrison Artillery followed by command of the 50th Gordon Highlanders (now perpetuated by the Canadian Scottish Regiment). He received a brigade command in the First Contingent being sent to Europe and proved himself a capable organizer and trainer.

During the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, Currie's brigade played a pivotal role in holding the Allied position. He rose to command the 1st Canadian Division in September 1915 and led it effectively for the next two years.

Currie the leader and tactician

While not a charismatic leader, his understanding of the importance of pre-battle preparation and the limited "set-piece" attack to "bite and hold" enemy positions derived from sincere concern over the needless sacrifice of lives in futile frontal assaults. He carefully studied the lessons of recent fighting and sought to implement them in the forces under his command.

This modest exterior belied his formidable capabilities as a military leader. Although Currie did not possess the charismatic presence often associated with famous generals, his humility and straightforward manner set him apart. His lack of ostentation made him approachable, and his reserved nature reflected a leadership philosophy grounded in substance rather than style.

In War Fighting, Currie demonstrated exemplary leadership by maintaining careful attention to detail and employing a pragmatic, analytical approach. He consistently prioritized the welfare of his troops, advocating for adequate resources and realistic objectives before engaging in combat. This strategic foresight contributed to the Canadian Corps' remarkable effectiveness on the battlefield, earning the respect of both subordinates and peers alike.

Within only two years, Currie rose from relative obscurity in Victoria British Columbia, to becoming one of Canada's greatest war time generals and to helping establish Canada as a significant player on the world stage.

If you would like to learn more about General Sir Arthur Currie, the Seminar being hosted on the Friday 5th Dec at Bay Street Armoury is open for registration. Details for registration can be found at the following pages. Note: renowned speakers are confirmed and should give us a great event.

Celebrating General Sir Arthur Currie
Canada's Greatest War Time General
150th Commemorative Celebration

HISTORICAL SEMINAR

Friday, 05 December 2025, Bay Street Armoury, Cost $125 per person

Timings*	Speakers	Topic
0800-0830	**Registration Check In**	**Registration/Coffee**
0830-0900	MGen (Ret'd) Stu McDonald BGen(Ret'd) Dave Patterson RCA Colonel Comdt	**Welcome**
0900 - 0945	Eric Tolman BA, MEd.	**Currie, The Victoria Years**
0945 - 1030	Col (Ret'd) Jim Kempling PhD	**Victoria Goes To War**
1030-1100	**Coffee**	**Coffee**
1100 - 1145	Mark Zuehlke	**The Brave Battalion**
1145 - 1230	**Lunch**	**Lunch**
1230 - 1330	Colonel Commandant, Honorary Colonels, Dignitaries	**Birthday Cake/ Commemorative Celebrations**

1330 - 1415	Dr. Tim Cook	**Currie, The War Years**
1415 - 1500	Dr. William F. Stewart	**What Made the Canadian Corps So Successful**
1500 - 1530	**Coffee**	**Coffee**
1530 - 1615	Dr. David Zimmerman	**Currie, After the War**
1615 - 1700	BGen (Retd) Patterson RCA Colonel Commandant	**Currie, The Legacy**
1700 - 1900	**Reception in Officers Mess** VIPs/ HCol (s)	**Reception in Officers Mess(es) –** no host bar; Hors D'oeuvres

HISTORICAL SEMINAR 5 DECEMBER 2025
REGISTRATION

Time/date: 8:00 am – 7:00 pm, Friday, December 5th, 2025.

Location: Bay Street Armoury (Currie Room – balcony level), 715 Bay Street, Victoria, BC.

Cost: $125.

Dress: Business casual.

Parking: Limited parking is available in the Field Street parking lot adjacent to the Bay Street Armoury.

Registration: Register by emailing the names of those in your party to: generalcurrie150@gmail.com .

Please wait until you have received confirmation of your Registration before sending the payment along. **Seating is limited**. Registration closes Friday, November 21st, 2025.

Payment: E-transfer. Send $125 to generalcurrie150@gmail.com with your name and registration in the message.

Contact us: LCol (Ret'd) Vic Skaarup @ 250-888-9174 or email archives.5bcartyregtrca@gmail.com .

Refund policy: Cancellations/changes accepted until the Registration deadline of November 21st, 2025. No refunds for no shows – exceptions may be considered.

Accommodation: An event rate of $189 plus taxes has been arranged with the **Coast Hotel and Marina,** 146 Kingston Street, Victoria BC for: "**Currie 150 "**for reservations falling within the period Dec. 3, 205 to Dec. 6, 2025**. MAKING RESERVATIONS –** a dedicated website is now available for attendees to book their hotel rooms online at: https://book.passkey.com/e/51117415

Editor: So, we have seen the Army set out where they would like to go as the Comd of the Canadian Army stated in his Inflection Point 2025 document issued August 2025. But the staffing process was not clear… at least to me. This article explains how they went about it.

Modernizing in an Interwar Period –Impression from the Canadian Army Modernization Team Working Groups

By LCol Todor (Ted) Dossev and LCol Matt Rolls - April 7th, 2025

Reading Time: 12 min

There is a tension in the Canadian Army (CA) between resources, structures, capabilities, and tasks. We have been trying to modernize our structures and capabilities since the mid 2010's to better respond to both the changing character of war, and to better align our tasks and structures.[1] But changing an institution is difficult, so the CA has stood up the Army Modernization Team (AMT), drawn from

the Army HQ staff, to modernize the CA force structure as part of a ready, resilient, and relevant CAF. Recently, the AMT invited a handful of experienced planners to a working group to develop capability options for a future CA. This was a rewarding but challenging effort because the CA is a complex adaptive system with competing imperatives. Its structures are contingent on emerging capabilities (as seen in Ukraine), on its own capacity to manage change, as well as on shifting resources and concurrent missions which can be difficult to forecast.

Over two weeks in January, six teams composed of experienced leaders, representing all corps and components, were asked to consider "the army we have" (AwH) and imagine how we might transition it to "the army we need in 2040," (AwN) while taking into account a number of proposed design characteristics and statements. To prepare us, the AMT had done their homework. They had conducted and analyzed a survey of over 150 currently serving leaders, assessed the wargames of the last senior army leaders' symposium, and initiated interviews with current and former army commanders and chiefs of defence. The AMT had also examined the most recent Force 2025 army restructure effort and considered those lessons in their own pre-mortem to imagine how current modernization effort could fail. Broadly, they conceived several paths to failure, of which a poor design was one small part (which our teams were there to reduce). The AMT also imagined failures to decide, to follow-through, to gain institutional support, or even a black swan change in the strategic context. This premortem highlighted the complexity of the system, in that the act of change itself is a key portion of the problem set. They identified four layers that make up the AwH: the field force, the reserves, the auxiliary (Canadian Rangers), and the institution. This framing served as a common lexicon of groupings to help discuss current structures while also setting apart this modernization effort from previous ones like F2025 which focused only on the field army and reserves. By including the institution in the considerations, the AMT explicitly acknowledged the interrelatedness of the CA and that force generation could not be considered separately from force management or force development. The AMT gave us dedicated time, a common language, and facilitators to explore these questions.

What the AMT could not give us, however, was the operating concepts and higher strategic concepts linking current defence policy and the army's role in future conflict and could only estimate future resource levels. These are all still works in progress, and in fact the CA's own future concept is only now circulating in draft. As a result, our team had to explicitly make assumptions and to define our terms just to refine

our shared understanding of language and not get bogged down during discussions. The first conceptual component to establish was the actual military problem the team was trying to solve. For team 5, we saw the problem set broadly as how the Army would contribute relevant forces to integrated, joint, combined forces in theaters of interest to protect Canada, Canadians, and their interests.[2] Next, we discussed so-called general purpose and specialized forces. Often these terms are used with little definition or discussion which leads to misunderstanding. Our group came to an understanding that specialist forces would be those developed to exclusively integrate into an allied formation without any capacity for independence. Lastly, we discussed the characteristics of Major Combat Operations / Large Scale Combat Operations (MCO / LSCO) and forces that would succeed in such an environment. We determined that a land force in such an environment would be required to seize and control key terrain and populations, and to destroy rival conventional land forces. This led us toward certain attributes of the force such as the capacity to combine arms and operate in a pan domain environment, while being sustainable, able to force project strategically, have operational reach once in theater, and still able integrate emerging capabilities. Only once we had clarified these assumptions and definitions, could we attack the problem.

Next, team 5 explored our individual preconceptions, leading to a philosophical discussion. In effect, the AMT gave us a structured method to use Col John Boyd's destruction and creation methodology of disintegrating the army into its smallest elements, then recombining them.[3] But the design statements had competing imperatives: to design an army that can fight across the spectrum of conventional mechanized conflict, but also in the arctic and at home; and in the Euro-Atlantic, and the Pacific, as well as sustainable at intercontinental distances, capable of protecting itself, also exercising command and control using emerging technologies like AI, cyber, and EW, resistant to disinformation, in a combined, joint, whole of government setting. In this regard, the draft Capstone concept uses a great turn of phrase: "A vision of the Army... that is multi-purpose, but not all purpose."[4] Teams were invited to make assumptions about additional investment in personnel and funding, even beyond 2% of GDP, and to recommend what units or capabilities could be divested, rerolled, retained, or added. The ideas were then also considered against their sustainability in the current and near future mission sets like deterrence, large scale combat operations, arctic operations, disaster relief (at home and abroad), and short notice surge operations.

It was both a daunting and invigorating task, given the interrelations of design imperatives. We knew that we would be tempted to tweak existing structures because we were anchored to our experiences and training. As historian Jack Watling notes, "instead of transforming their combined arms elements, armies today are largely seeking to retain tried and tested structures while adding new capabilities onto their platforms."[5] This is the conservative instinct of our branches and army, because we could not possibly know what the future holds, we are tempted to retain every possible capability, just in case. Historic inertia both teaches and constrains us, and we struggle to preserve hard-earned skills. But, we were encouraged by two other considerations. The first, to paraphrase a comment made by Hew Stachan during The Cold War, was that whatever we are working on, we would get it wrong. What matters, though, would be our capacity to get it right quickly when the moment arrives.[6] That encouraged us to place emphasis on adaptability and scalability. Secondly, though we never discussed it explicitly, we had to recall this had been done well enough in the past, "…in spite of low military budgets and considerable antipathy… military institutions were able to innovate in the 1920s and 1930s with considerable success."[7] So we plotted the types of missions we might be tasked to perform, against where we might have to perform them, and began developing the capability sets that would be suited for these potential missions by modifying the four layers of AwH.

From these discussions emerged the themes and tensions with which the CA and AMT would have to wrestle. The first was the requirement to balance force generation for the priority theaters and their varying threats while retaining forces which were usable for both short-notice contingencies and enduring missions. Our group endeavored to create a force able to operate domestically, as well as in the arctic, while remaining capable of fighting in Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific. Secondly, the influence of the war in Ukraine required us to balance between exquisite, high end, but low-density forces versus cheaper, more robust, and numerous forces. Thirdly, we needed an Army that was sustainable, or at least able to regenerate itself following attrition to maintain persistence in a theater of operations. Next, we identified a tension between positional and maneuver operations, and how each would lead to designing a slightly different force. It is unclear what the future of warfare holds, however, Ukraine provides a clear example that positional fighting remains a viable and potentially inevitable form that the Army does not develop doctrinally, organize or train for structure itself. Lastly, all these themes were considered through the lens of readiness expressed as personnel,

equipment, training, and sustainment. Readiness, however, is meaningless unless one can respond to the question of ready for what, with what, and by when.[8] Finally, the details of the force were almost less important than identifying these tensions, and the unenviable task of the AMT to critically assess and reconcile them.

The experience was difficult but positive and left our team optimistic. Unlike the relatively simple tactical decisions of a frontal, or flanking movement, there are countless possibilities for how to organize, equip, and train an army – even one as small as ours. Given a nearly blank slate, and surrounded by talented professionals, the act of designing a system as complex as an army for an unknown future was surprisingly difficult. When extended over a longer period, with the uncertainties of government needs, technologies, resourcing, and the changing character of war, it becomes even more daunting. But the process used by the AMT was both deliberate and open-ended. They created an environment to gather ideas, identify tensions, and map the challenges of getting from the AwH to the AwN.

On the final day, all teams provided separate briefs back to the AMT, while COS Strat circulated as we worked. The collected data is still being analyzed by the AMT and was not shared between the teams. It is unlikely that the proposals of any one team would make the complete design of the future army, but rather that ideas from all would be integrated and presented for decision. From this limited exposure, it seemed that this effort was not to propose a structural solution to a perpetual under-resourcing problem but instead is much farther reaching than Force 2025 ever was. It is not simply an act of modernization, which we sorely need, but of adaptation, both to our environment, and in habituating the CA to adapting. So, to paraphrase the proverb, though the best time to begin change was 20 years ago, the second-best time is now.

It is easy now to feel empathy for the armies of the interwar periods of the last century. They were probably filled with too few effectives stretched too far, and could see the potential for their future wars, but did not have the time or resources to invest in all possible emerging capabilities. And though we know that whatever modernization path we choose will be at least a little wrong, the effort is more than worthwhile. We know that the next army will be slightly better prepared than the one we have, that we will have practiced changing, and we would be establishing the process for adapting ourselves. Finally, we have examples of successful modernization in past interwar periods, so whatever our leaders decide, we know that we could only get better at responding to the needs of our nation.

About the Author(s).

LCol Ted Dossev is a husband, father, and cavalry officer currently serving as the Chief of Staff at the Combat Training Centre in Gagetown, NB. He is an Art of War Scholar, and a graduate of the US Army School of Advanced Military Studies.

LCol Matt Rolls is a member of The RCR currently serving in Chief Combat Systems Integration within VCDS and takes command of 2 RCR in APS 2025. He has served in CMP, CANSOFCOM, and VCDS. He is a husband and father.

End Notes

For comparison, the US Army of 1941 had a very similar problem in preparing for its next war. See especially the fascinating history here: Kirkpatrick, Charles E. An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941. U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1996, www.history.army.mil/html/books/093/93-10/.

For a philosophical discussion on contribution warfare, see for instance, Vanya Eftimova Bellinger. "When Resources Drive Strategy: Understanding Clausewitz/Corbett's War Limited by Contingent." *Military Strategy Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 1, spring 2020, pp. 27-34. www.militarystrategymagazine.com/article/when-resources-drive-strategy-understanding-clausewitz-corbetts-war-limited-by-contingent/. In the Canadian case, the war limited by contingent tends to be war limited by resources – in effect, a strategy of means.

Boyd, John R. "Destruction and Creation." 3 Sept. 1976, www.coljohnboyd.com/static/documents/1976-09-03_Boyd_John_R_Destruction_and_Creation.pdf.

Canadian Army Land Warfare Centre. *Canadian Army Capstone Operating Concept*, Study Draft 1, dated 29 January 2025, not available yet for wide distribution; A much more blunt statement appears in Kirkpatrick's *Writing the Victory Plan*, where he says: "In the end, they could only assume what the national policy might be and guess at the intentions of their own government.", p 36.

Watling, Jack. *The Arms of the Future: Technology and Close Combat in the Twenty-First Century*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2023, 5. For an overview of these ideas, see: Huminski, Joshua C. "#WavellReviews the Arms of the Future." *Wavell Room*, 27 Dec. 2023, www.wavellroom.com/2023/12/27/wavellreviews-the-arms-of-the-future/.

Michael Howard, "Military Science in the Age of Peace," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 119, March 1974, pp. 3-9. The complete quote is: "I am tempted to declare that whatever doctrine the Armed Forces are working on, they have got it wrong. I am also tempted to declare that it does not matter that they have got it wrong. What does matter is their capacity to get it right quickly when the

moment arrives. It is the task of military science in an age of peace to prevent the doctrine being too badly wrong."

Murray, Williamson, and Allan R. Millett, editors. "Introduction." *Innovation in the Interwar Period*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 2.

Betts, Richard K. *Military Readiness: Concepts, Choices, Consequences*. Brookings Institution Press, 1995..

Same Old or Something New? Canadian Defence Procurement in the Carney Era

David A. Borys October 2, 2025 Published in CDA INSTITUTE

As many people are aware, the Canadian government recently announced significant increases to the nation's defence budget. In June 2025, Prime Minister Carney shared that his government would increase defence spending in such a way as to eventually hit 3.5% GDP for core military spending and 1.5% GDP for defence related infrastructure. This massive spending program includes a laundry list of expenditures that will undoubtedly help to not only modernize the CAF but improve much-needed morale amongst the CAF.

What marks this boost in spending as unique is that there have been few examples in Canadian history of such a dramatic increase in defence spending during peacetime. In fact, much of Canada's most ambitious defence spending programs have come after the nation was already committed to a conflict while peacetime has generally seen little to no significant investment.

Canada's involvement in the South African War from 1899-1902 highlighted how far the Canadian army truly was from being a self-sustaining modern professional force. In the aftermath of that conflict, several reform initiatives were launched, which saw the Canadian army expand, incorporating engineers, signals, an army service corps for logistics and a medical staff. Eventually, these reforms would culminate in the 1904 Militia Act, a significant piece of legislation that saw Canada's army better prepared for war than it ever had been. It took war to highlight Canada's military unreadiness.

Few people would have predicted the depth of Canada's involvement in the First World War. Yet, by 1915, it was clear that both the Canadian army and Canadian war industry needed rapid overhauling to sustain what was slowly becoming Canada's

largest commitment to war to that date. While Canada's coastlines were defended by the Imperial Japanese Navy and the Royal Navy, our own tin-pot navy having been incorporated into the RN, it was Canada's army and industry that underwent dramatic expansion. What was a permanent force of 3,000 personnel expanded by 1917 to the incredible size of 650,000 men and women. This came with serious growing pains, including an embarrassing fall from grace by then Minister of Militia Sam Hughes. Our war industry expanded in an almost unbelievable manner, becoming one of the key munitions suppliers for Britain's entire war effort. The Imperial Munitions Board, which had 675 factories in Canada, operated at a budget three times the size of the federal government.

The war to end all wars was supposed to be just that. Thus, the inter-war period saw continual cuts to defence spending. Factories were shut down, personnel were discharged, and the public largely lost interest in defence matters. This was further exacerbated by the Great Depression, which shockingly almost saw Canada's navy completely mothballed.

The beginning of the Second World War posed similar 1914-esque challenges to the Canadian forces, except now all three branches were faced with the need for rapid expansion and modernization, especially after the fall of France in 1940. Much like 1914, the Canadian military was wholly unprepared for the war to come. It certainly found a way to rise to the challenge and did so bravely and with great success, but not without some panicked scrambling to get there.

Like the previous conflicts, the Korean War once again shone a spotlight on a depleted and atrophying military. Significant cuts to defence spending after 1945 had to be reversed when Canada committed to the UN action in 1950. It was that conflict, however, that kick-started a veritable golden age of defence spending under Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent and his Cold War successors.

But as the Cold War came to an end, so too did Canadian support for defence spending. In fact, this support was wavering long before, and the 1990s became the low point of defence support. Despite this, the country would once again have to scramble in the face of threats when Canada committed to supporting its NATO allies in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

The point here is that Canadian defence spending ebbs and flows. We seem to be a nation that responds quickly to immediate threats, but also a nation that fails to look farther than our own noses when it comes to preparing for future threats 'down the

road'. Perhaps with Carney's much-needed investment in the CAF, he is doing something that very few peacetime Canadian leaders have ever done, anticipating instead of playing catch-up, being proactive instead of reactive. Certainly, many critics could argue that we are in fact still operating in a reactive state, and there is certainly much to react against, but if these spending promises are fulfilled within a decade or two, the CAF will find itself a formidable middle power force with the kind of modern equipment that will allow it to be flexible in facing an uncertain geo-political order.

The key to all this, however, is continued public will. If at any point the Canadian public decides that defence spending is no longer an important issue, it won't matter what promises have been made, the political leaders of that day will have to bend to the will of the people. For those of us in the defence community who see defence spending as an investment in a secure future and a fundamental asset to the Canadian nation let's hope the public will continue to understand the necessity of this type of support for the CAF and will continue to elect politicians who understand the value of being prepared and anticipating threats as opposed to simply reacting to them. As Benjamin Franklin once said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." Canadians should take this to heart.

The views expressed in this op-ed are the author's/authors' own and do not necessarily represent those of the Canadian Defence Institute or its staff.

David A. Borys is a Canadian military historian whose research focuses on Canada and the world wars with particular focus on the relationship between the military and civilian populations. His most recent book is titled *Punching Above Our Weight: The Canadian Military at War Since 1867* and was published by Dundurn in 2024. David is also the producer, writer and host of the popular Canadian history podcast, *Curious Canadian History*. Now in its eleventh season the show continually ranks in the top 50 of all history podcasts in Canada. David is also the producer and host of his newest podcast *The Conflict and Culture Podcast* which explores anything and everything to do with military history beyond the battlefield.

Historic First! CF-188 Hornets successfully landed on Estonia's Jägala-Käravete Highway, demonstrating Agile Combat Employment. This marks the first highway landing for Canada's Fighter Force, showcasing the ability to operate in austere environments and rapidly redeploy.

Historic First! CF-18 Hornets successfully land on Estonia's Jägala-Käravete Highway

The exercise was conducted by eight Canadian fighter jets that joined Italian Air Force Eurofighter Typhoons and one Estonian transport plane as part of TARASSIS 25, a broader NATO initiative to demonstrate "Agile Combat Employment," which includes a series of exercises across Europe.

"This approach reflects NATO's Agile Combat Employment concept, dispersing aircraft and crews across multiple locations to enhance survivability, adaptability and rapid reinforcement," NATO said in a release last month.

The RCAF members currently stationed in Estonia are part of Operation REASSURANCE, the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) largest oversees mission, "through which the CAF contributes to NATO deterrence and defence measures in Central and Eastern Europe," the federal government says.

The operation "is part of the biggest reinforcement of Alliance collective defence in a generation."

The deployment of Canadian service members to Europe comes as tensions between NATO and Russia steadily increase. Eastern and northern European countries have also reported dozens of drone incursions in recent months over airports and military bases.

Global Affairs Canada called these repeated incursions “extremely dangerous” provocations.

During Monday’s RCAF exercise, Canadian pilots practised low passes, as well as “touch-and-go” landings. The first RCAF landing was a jet flown by decorated pilot Maxime Renaud, Estonia’s public broadcaster, ERR, reported on Tuesday.

Canadian Military Jets Conduct Drills in Europe Amid Drone Incursions

By Todd Coyne

Published: September 25, 2025 at 6:38PM EDT

Royal Canadian Air Force CF-18s arrive at RAF Waddington in the U.K as part of exercise Cobra Warrior on Sept. 3, 2025. (Air Specialist Class 2 Nicholas /AS2 Nicholas Purnell RAF)

The deputy commander of a detachment of Canadian fighter jets conducting exercises in Europe says the team is prepared to join any NATO response to recent drone incursions on alliance airspace if required.

Maj. Sebastien Tremblay-Verreault, deputy commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force’s 425 Tactical Fighter Squadron, is leading a contingent of eight CF-18 Hornets and more than 150 RCAF personnel currently assigned to war games in the United Kingdom and the Baltic states.

Canada's participation in the combat drills is intended to bolster its NATO presence and provide invaluable training to aircrews and mission planners alongside partner countries like Germany, Italy, the U.K. and the United States.

But the deployment is happening against a backdrop of increasing tensions between the NATO alliance and Russia, while mysterious sightings of large drones over airports and military installations in Northern and Eastern Europe continue.

NATO warned Russia on Tuesday that it would employ "all necessary military and non-military tools" to defend itself and deter threats after Russian drones and armed fighter jets violated Polish and Estonian airspace.

The alliance has launched "Eastern Sentry" to strengthen its defences near the border with Russia, a move that Global Affairs Canada welcomed in a statement condemning the airspace incursions as "extremely dangerous" provocations.

"We might have to react or adjust as required but it does, in essence, prove that that our presence is relevant here," Tremblay-Verreault said in a video call Thursday from a U.K airbase, where organizers of the multi-nation Cobra Warrior exercise were monitoring as more drone sightings were reported overnight in Denmark.

"Since it's happening close to us, it is on our minds and in the minds of our crews," the deputy commander added. "As these things happen, we've been integrating them into operations in order to bolster the NATO presence."

An RCAF C-130 refuels a pair of Canadian CF-18's during Exercise Cobra Warrior on Sept. 16, 2025. (Air Specialist Class 2 Nicholas /AS2 Nicholas Purnell RAF)

The fleet of CF-18 Hornets is expected to decamp from the U.K. for Estonia in the coming days, where it will link up with the Canadian-led NATO brigade in nearby Latvia for additional combat-readiness drills with forces from across Europe.

A key focus for the RCAF pilots in Estonia will be learning how to take off and land on rural highways – a wartime rapid-deployment skill that has never before been attempted in a CF-18, according to Tremblay-Verreault.

Recent upgrades to the aircraft – particularly, a new radar system and upgraded AIM-9X Sidewinder air-to-air missiles – have helped the fourth-generation CF-18s hold their own among the most advanced fighter jets in Europe, including the fifth-generation F-35, the deputy commander said.

“We’re not the participant that needs to be protected by other participants,” Tremblay-Verreault said. “We are on the front line.”

Canada’s participation in the exercises is part of Operation Reassurance, the Canadian Armed Forces’ primary contribution to NATO security.

In a statement earlier this month, Lt.-Col. Maxime Renaud, commander of the Air Task Force for Operation Reassurance, says the RCAF’s presence in Europe is an opportunity to “develop advanced tactics, and directly contribute to NATO’s defence posture.”

The RCAF detachment is expected to return to Canada by the end of October barring any as-yet unforeseen events.

“We’re kind of standing by and watching,” said Tremblay-Verreault. “We’ve got business to do, so we’re going to do it as per the exercise and try not to think about it. But who knows what might happen.”

HMCS Summerside is seen departing Halifax in May of 2024. The ship is set to be paid off this fall along with others in the Kingston-class, including HMC Ships Shawinigan, Goose Bay, Glace Bay, Kingston, Saskatoon, Whitehorse and Brandon.
CPL MITCHELL PAQUETTE

> ***The Payoff of western MCDVs took place at CFB Esquimalt in early October. More details in Article. (editor)***

The Royal Canadian Navy Pays Off Kingston-Class Vessels

By RCN

In the fall of 2025, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) began paying off the Kingston-class Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels (MCDVs).

The term “paying off” refers to the British practice of paying a crew their wages once a ship has completed its voyage. In the RCN, the tradition continues with the term

paying off referring to the formal ceremony where the naval jack, ensign, and commissioning pennant are hauled down, the crew departs a ship for the last time, and the ship is then no longer referred to as His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS).

This fall, eight of the twelve Kingston-class ships were paid off during formal naval ceremonies to recognize and celebrate their long and distinguished service. These ceremonies took place in Halifax for HMC Ships *Shawinigan*, *Summerside*, *Goose Bay*, *Glace Bay* and *Kingston*. Ceremonies in Esquimalt, B.C. were held for HMC Ships *Saskatoon*, *Whitehorse* and *Brandon*.

The RCN's four remaining operational Kingston-class vessels will consolidate under Canadian Fleet Atlantic in Halifax, N.S. As such, HMCS *Moncton* will remain based in Halifax, HMC Ships *Yellowknife* and *Edmonton* recently transferred to the east coast, and HMCS *Nanaimo* will transit to Halifax later this year. This will support current operational commitments, and efficient maintenance and crewing of the remaining Kingston-class vessels and the broader RCN fleet. The remaining Kingston-class vessels will be gradually paid off in the years ahead.

There is no loss of capability for the RCN as a result of the divestment of the Kingston-class – their missions and tasks will be redistributed to other existing ships and assets, and taken on by new platforms, capabilities and systems being introduced by the RCN. For example, naval mine counter-measure roles will be mitigated within Fleet Diving Units, and remote and autonomous systems operated from RCN vessels. The Harry DeWolf-class Arctic and Offshore Vessels are an operationally capable platform that will also take on Kingston-class roles such as counter-narcotics operations. To continue investing in our sailors, the training role of the Kingston-class will be assumed by an expanded fleet of Orca-class vessels.

While looking forward to the introduction of new, modern warships to its fleet, the RCN has a robust plan in place to facilitate this transition, while maintaining excellence in training and operational capability.

"Kingston-class vessels have provided the Royal Canadian Navy with a significant, impactful, and flexible capability throughout their many years of service. They have provided a training ground for many of our sailors, where key skills and roles have been learned. These ships have contributed important mine countermeasure roles on international operations and have regularly participated in exercises with partner navies abroad, and with the Royal Canadian Navy fleet along our Canadian coastlines. As we move towards the future of the Royal Canadian Navy, I want to recognize the

service of these ships and extend my tremendous gratitude to all who have sailed within them," said Vice-Admiral Angus Topshee, Commander Royal Canadian Navy.

A Comment by an unidentified respondent to this article:

Actually, more likely they're being paid off because the AOPS can do all the missions of the Kingston class, except BETTER. They have better sea keeping, slightly more speed, better range/endurance/crew accommodations, are icebreakers, better armed, better sensors, huge flight deck and hangar, a vehicle deck and capability for limited assault roles, TEU container compatible so all the mission modules that are available to the Kingstons can be used still. If anything, the only reason to keep the Kingston class is to transfer some of them to the coast guard to replace some of its oldest remaining hulls and put the rest up for disposal. Halifax shipyards built them originally; I'm sure Irving might have some ideas for conversion work. There are a couple hydrographic survey ships and a fisheries patrol vessel which were all built in the late 60s that are long overdue for replacement, which the Kingstons are faster and longer ranged than (as well as 30 years younger) and the government has previously shown a willingness to adopt "interim" ships for the coast guard in the past five years. Its probably faster and possibly cheaper to convert three Kingstons and get them into service than wait for Seaspan to build new replacements for them.

Canada's Role in building F-35 fighter jet:

You will be surprised by the number of Canadian businesses that are making parts for all the jets rolling off the final production line. *See the You Tube video of the CBC news report by clicking on this link.*

Turning the wrench on Army modernization

June 17, 2024 - Canadian Army

Author: Corporal Brad Upshall, 5th Canadian Division Public Affairs

Caption

A Vehicle Technician at CFB Halifax balances the tires of a military vehicle.

Maintenance backlogs have become commonplace for Vehicle Technicians in the Canadian Armed Forces. With a growing list of demands, sophisticated vehicles and fewer resources, it poses increasing challenges to meet growing operational demands.

Enter Master Warrant Officer (MWO) Chester Muise. As the Equipment Technical Sergeant-Major with 5th Canadian Division, he sought out to identify a solution to help alleviate growing stress within the trade.

“A large component of my position involves meeting with Workshop Managers frequently to discuss the difficulties they deal with,” explains MWO Muise. “We need to challenge ourselves to be more efficient in every aspect, without compromising safety. So, we have to ask ourselves: is there a better way for us to do business?”

Consulting with his peers, it became apparent to MWO Muise that military vehicle inspections were longer, more in-depth and time-consuming than the civilian standard. He noted that military inspections were required every 12 months, while the Nova Scotia standard is 24 months. Calculating that the average inspection takes approximately four hours to complete, MWO Muise knew that there had to be a better way.

“If military vehicle inspections were required once every 24 months, it would free up approximately 11,000 total hours for our Vehicle Technicians across the Canadian Army,” Muise concluded. “This change would allow the Technicians to focus on higher priority equipment, leading to an overall increase in efficiency and productivity.”

It was not long before MWO Muise was recognized for his contribution with an official ‘Commendation’ from the Army Commander.

“Modernization is a mindset,” stated Brigadier-General Stéphane Masson, Commander of 5th Canadian Division. “Master Warrant Officer Muise’s forward thinking and action will have a significant impact on 5th Canadian Division as our maintenance managers modernize their work processes to remove constraints that they previously faced.”

“It is the collaboration and open lines of communication between members of all ranks that can offer ground-up solutions,” stated MWO Muise. “It is important that we challenge ourselves to not only point out problems but actively offer solutions.”

Canada Narrows Choice for New Submarines

October 2, 2025 Link Published in CDA INSTITUTE

VAdm (Ret) Bob Davidson and RAdm (Ret) Luc Cassivi
Expert Series October 14, 2025
Youtube Video

Canada has shortlisted two international shipbuilders, Germany’s TKMS and South Korea’s Hanwha Ocean, for its Canadian Patrol Submarine Project, which aims to replace the Royal Canadian Navy’s aging Victoria-class submarines. The program plans to acquire up to 12 conventionally powered submarines with under-ice capability and extended endurance, with the first delivery targeted for the mid-

2030s. Both bids are now being evaluated for technical performance, delivery timelines, and potential economic benefits to Canadian industry. A final selection could be made as early as late 2025 or early 2026, with contract signing to follow. Full fleet delivery is projected to occur in the 2040s.

On today's episode, CDAI Board members VAdm (Ret) Bob Davidson and RAdm (Ret) Luc Cassivi discuss Canada's submarine replacement efforts, implications of the downselection and the factors that lead to the shortlisting, technical requirements of the new submarine fleet, Canada's industrial capacity to contribute to the construction of the new submarines, managing long-term sustainment, interoperability with allies, and the potential impact of the new defence procurement agency on the submarine acquisition process.

Link to report at this YouTube Link, 50 minutes. Copy and insert in your browser.