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Training continues at sea

After departing from Halifax on July 15 and assuming duties as Flagship of Standing NATO Maritime Group One, the ship's company of HMCS Ville de Québec continue to hone their skills. Pictured: Master Sailor Bernie Gagnon, a member of the ship's Casualty Clearing Team, performs first aid on a simulated casualty in the Norwegian Sea on July 31.

LE CPL GREGORY COLE

FINANCIÈRE SISIP FINANCIAL

Making sense of pension buyback after parental leave

By SISIP Financial

The first few months after a new baby arrives are a lot of things, and organized is rarely one of them. Between the sleep deprivation, the mountain of tiny laundry, and learning to keep a small human alive, "pension paperwork" doesn't exactly rise to the top of the to-do list.

But here's the thing: if you took maternity or parental leave as a CAF member, there's a financial decision silently waiting for you in the background. It's called a pension buyback, and understanding it sooner rather than later can make a real difference to your retirement.

So what exactly is a pension buyback?

When you're on maternity or parental leave, your CAF pension contributions may be reduced or paused entirely. That gap in contributions means a gap in your pensionable service, and your pension is calculated, in part, based on your total years of service.

A buyback lets you pay back into the pension for that time away, effectively restoring those months as though you had been contributing all along. The result? A higher pension when you eventually retire.

It might sound like a minor tweak, but over a full military career, even a few extra months of pensionable service can meaningfully shift your retirement income. That's not nothing.

It's not an automatic "yes"

A buyback isn't the right call for everyone. The cost depends on factors like your salary and how long your leave was, so the price tag varies.

And let's be real: when you're a new parent, money is already being pulled in a dozen directions. Childcare is expensive. You might be settling into a new home or realizing that you now need to increase your life insurance. The idea of making a significant financial contribution on top of all that can feel like a lot.

The good news is that a buyback doesn't have to be all or nothing, or all at once. You may be able to spread payments over time through payroll deductions, or make a lump sum contribution (which can be a transfer from your RRSP or another pension plan) if that works better for your situation. Understanding the options can make the decision feel far less daunting.

Three questions worth asking

Before deciding either way, it helps to work through the trade-offs honestly. Start here:

1. What would the buyback actually cost me?
2. How much more pension would I receive in retirement as a result?
3. How does this fit with what our family needs financially right now?

There's rarely a single right answer. The goal isn't to optimize perfectly, but rather to make an informed decision that you feel good about.

That said, there's one thing worth knowing sooner rather than later: The longer you wait to buy back, the more it typically costs. Buyback amounts are generally calculated based on your current salary, which tends to grow over time. Acting earlier, when you're at a lower pay grade, can work in your favour.

Getting help with the numbers

A SISIP advisor can help you think through whether a buyback fits your broader financial picture and weigh it against your other priorities. To estimate the cost, members should use the service buyback estimator through the My CAF Pension portal. If you do not have access, or if you need help estimating the cost, contact the Canadian Armed Forces Pension Centre.

Every CAF family's situation is different. Career stage, family plans, posting schedules, and financial priorities all play a role in what makes sense for you. The early months of parenthood can be chaotic, but this pension decision doesn't have to be.

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S2 Hassan Khalid receives the Community Lifesaver Award from the Singapore Civil Defence Force in Singapore on July 18, 2026.

LT(N) ROSA GUTIERREZ

S2 Hassan Khalid is joined by S1 Jaden Majensky, Lieutenant (N) Rosa Gutierrez, and members of the public following the award ceremony in Singapore on July 18.

SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE

Sailor recognized for helping save a life during Indo-Pacific deployment

By Lieutenant (N) Rosa Gutierrez

A Royal Canadian Navy sailor has been recognized by the Singaporean Civil Defence Force for helping save a person's life after providing emergency first aid to an individual who suddenly collapsed.

At the time, His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Charlottetown* was conducting a port visit in Singapore under Operation HORIZON. During an off-duty outing, Sailor 2nd Class (S2) Hassan Khalid, a Naval Electronic Sensor Operator serving aboard the ship, came across a person in medical distress. Working alongside two other bystanders, S2 Khalid helped perform CPR, deploy an AED, and provide oxygen ventilation. Their immediate response provided critical first aid that supported the patient long enough for the paramedics to arrive.

For his actions, S2 Khalid received the Community Lifesaver Award from the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF). As the highest tier of the SCDF's community recognition program, this award recognizes individuals who have directly contributed to a successful lifesaving effort or risked their own safety while assisting others during life-threatening emergencies.

The recognition highlights the importance of first aid training and the ability to respond effectively when every second counts. S2 Khalid's quick response and decisive actions helped save a life. "We are incredibly proud of S2 Khalid," said Commander Jonathan Maurice, Commanding Officer of His Majesty's Canadian Ship *Charlottetown*. "He demonstrated the calm judgement, professionalism, and compassion we strive to instill in every sailor."

Reflecting on the recognition, S2 Khalid said, "I'm very honoured to receive this award, but what means the most to me is knowing that I was able to help someone when they needed it. I joined the Canadian Armed Forces to serve, and I'm just grateful I was in a position to make a positive difference that day."

Operation HORIZON reflects Canada's growing commitment to the Indo-Pacific region. HMCS *Charlottetown* is expected to return to Halifax in late summer 2026.

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How the RCN is preparing to fight drones

By RCN

Members of the Advanced Naval Capabilities (ANC) Unit assembling a modular uncrewed aerial system.

LCPL CONOR MUNN

Once viewed as a nuisance on the battlefield, drones have evolved into a significant operational challenge in modern warfare. Their widespread use has forced militaries to adapt how they fight, challenging assumptions about the role and survivability of large, expensive platforms.

At sea, the growing use of uncrewed systems is reshaping the threat environment. Recent conflicts have shown how relatively inexpensive technologies can damage high-value assets, disrupt operations and drive changes in naval tactics and force protection.

"Quite simply, it's evolved very rapidly," said Commander (Cdr) Phillip Durand, one of the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN) experts in maritime counter-drone operations.

He points to the 2020 conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia as a turning point in how the world viewed the threat posed by drones.

"Azerbaijan employed a mix of armed drones, loitering munitions and remotely piloted explosive aircraft," Cdr Durand noted. "They overwhelmed Armenian air defences, giving Azerbaijan control of the airspace. What had been a longstanding stalemate shifted decisively in about a month."

"That moment marked drones as a true game changer in modern warfare."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine reinforced that lesson, demonstrating how inexpensive drones could challenge much larger conventional forces both on land and at sea.

"We anticipated this evolution would extend to the sea, and it has," he added. "We've seen surface drones used very effectively, particularly by Ukraine, and the rapid emergence of undersea uncrewed systems as well."

In 2024, Ukraine used an explosive uncrewed surface vessel to sink a Russian corvette, illustrating the growing impact of uncrewed maritime systems on naval warfare.

Such developments highlight how rapidly the threat environment continues to evolve.

"Even the observations I share today may be outdated within weeks because the technology is evolving so quickly," Cdr Durand stressed.

For the RCN, adapting to this threat means rethinking how it detects, deters and responds to uncrewed systems operating above, on and below the sea.

Why drones are difficult to counter

Drones present challenges that are significantly different from traditional threats. Unlike conventional aircraft or missiles, they can be launched in large numbers at a fraction of the cost.

Their small size makes them difficult to detect, while their ability to operate in swarms can overwhelm traditional defence systems.

"We're used to tracking and engaging large, metallic military platforms," he explained. "Drones are often small, made of plastic, foam, or cardboard, and easily expendable."

The operating environment becomes even more complicated in Canadian waters as distinguishing between routine activity and a genuine threat requires a careful combination of technology, training and judgment.

How Canada's Navy is adapting

The RCN is strengthening its approach to countering drones by building on existing capabilities rather than relying on a single solution.

The Navy's approach combines sensors, electronic warfare systems, force protection measures, training and emerging technologies into a layered defence designed to respond to a wide range of threats. This layered approach allows the Navy to respond to a wide range of scenarios while maintaining readiness against more traditional threats.

However, keeping pace with technological change remains a constant challenge.

New ideas must be tested and refined, but their true value is only realized when they become deployable capabilities available to the Fleet.

For Cdr Durand, bridging the gap between experimentation and implementation is one of the Navy's most important challenges. While iteration and innovation remain essential, he argues that success is not measured by the number of prototypes developed, but by the capabilities ultimately delivered to sailors.

"*We often produce impressive proto-*

Drone Operators from ANC Unit operate the G15 Sentinel during Operation NUNALIVUT.

MCPL ALANA MORIN

types, but without a pathway to procurement. If we can't buy the system, field it and put it in sailors' hands, then we haven't created real capability."

As technology continues to evolve, the Navy's challenge will be ensuring that promising ideas make the journey from concept to capability.

Preparing for tomorrow's battlespace

Looking ahead, Cdr Durand expects uncrewed systems to become even more prevalent.

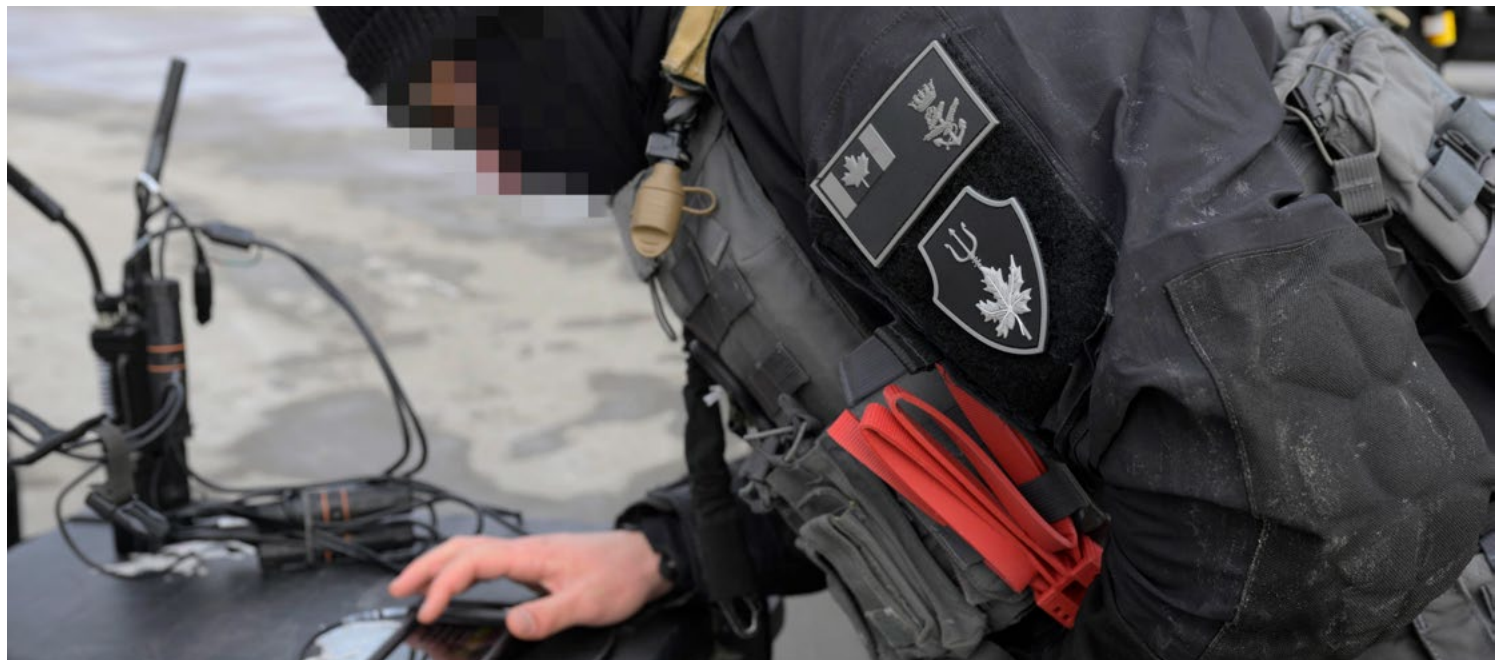
"We foresee, in the next few years, the operational battlespace to be saturated with uncrewed systems, from air, surface and subsurface."

Preparing for that future requires more than new technology alone.

The RCN is adapting how it trains, plans, and operates to account for the growing role of uncrewed systems across the maritime domain.

"Our training now treats uncrewed systems as just another threat type, alongside aircraft, missiles, or surface contacts," Cdr Durand explained. "Sailors learn how to recognize, classify, and respond appropriately."

Meeting this challenge also depends on collaboration.



A Marine Tactical Operator from ANC Unit configuring a deployable Counter-UAS system during a demonstration in Halifax in early 2025.

CPL MORGAN LEBLANC

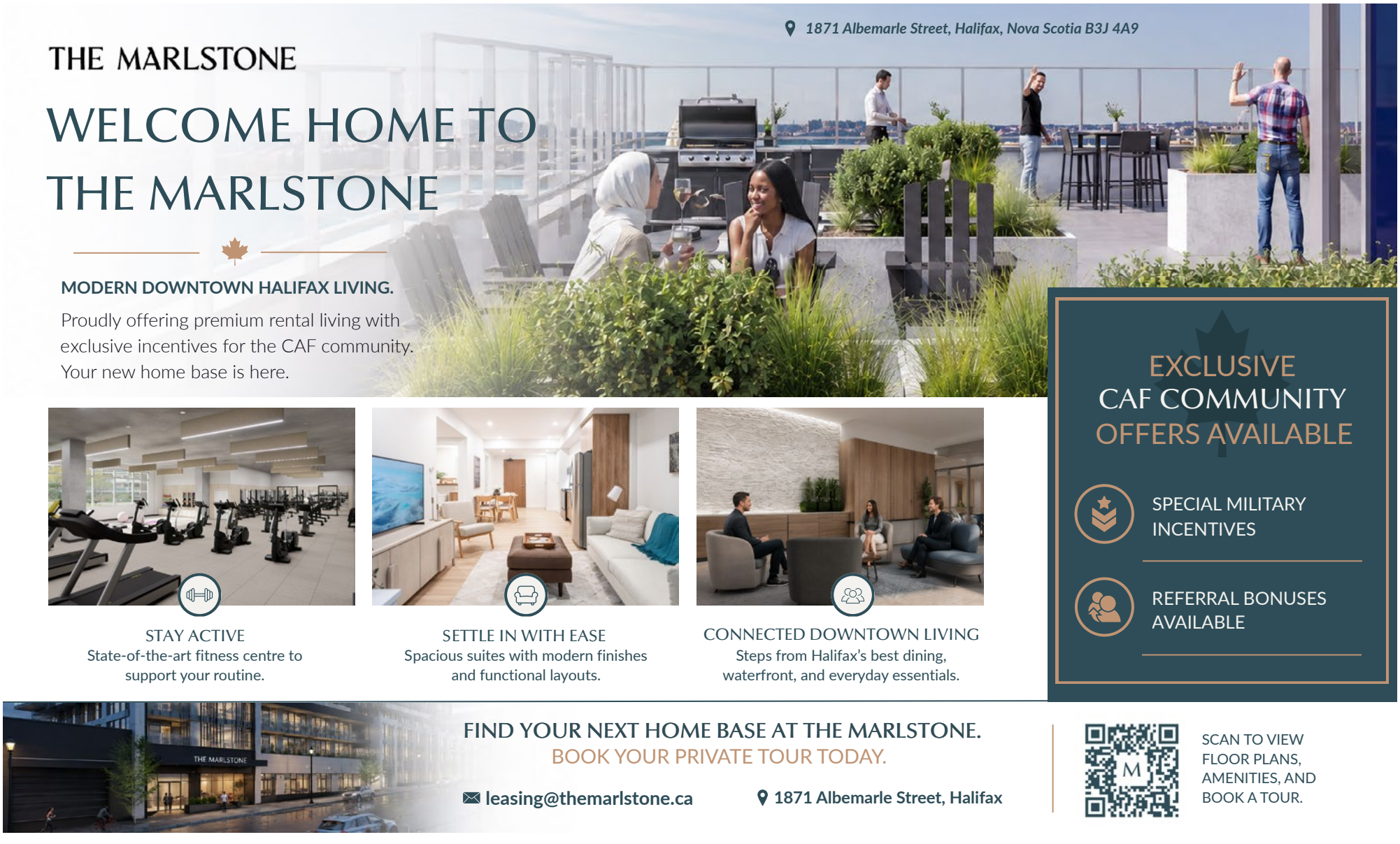
The RCN works closely with partners across Canada and internationally, including organizations such as the RCMP, Transport Canada and allies across NATO to share expertise and develop solutions.

The Government of Canada recently launched the Defence Drone Initiative (DDI), a new program that will accelerate the development, testing and production of Canadian uncrewed and autonomous systems. By connecting operational requirements with Canadian innovation and industry expertise, the initiative aims to help deliver the next generation of capabilities to the CAF and Canadian Coast Guard more quickly.

These efforts are helping shape how Canada and its allies approach the challenge.

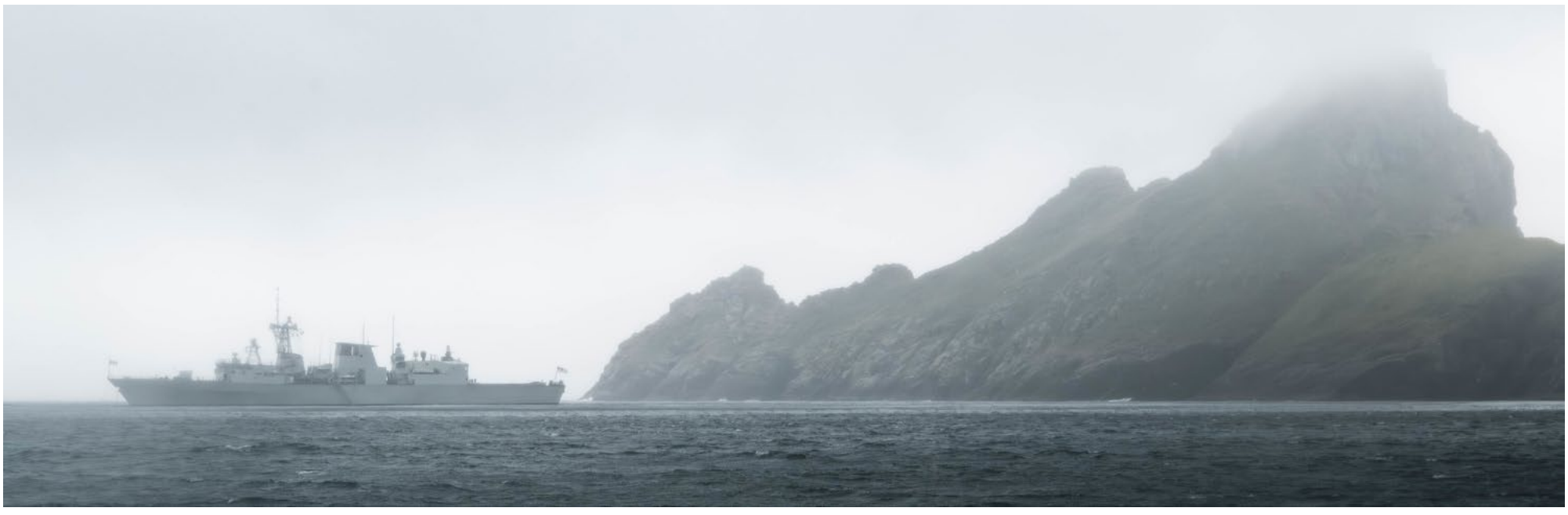
"We understand this threat deeply, and we're helping define how it will be addressed internationally. The next step is translating strategy and concepts into fielded capability, so our sailors remain at the cutting edge," he concluded.

As drones continue to transform battlespace, the RCN's focus remains clear: ensuring sailors have the tools, training and capabilities they need to operate safely and effectively in an increasingly complex threat environment.



Family and friends were at the jetty on July 15 to see the ship off in Halifax.
CPL ANTONIO GARCIA ALVAREZ

The ship's company of HMCS Ville de Québec, along with SNMG1 colleagues and Lord Provost Jacqueline McLaren, at the Glasgow City Chambers in late July.
CPL GREGORY COLE



HMCS Ville de Québec sits at anchor near the Scottish St. Kilda Islands during Operation REASSURANCE on July 28.
CPL ANTONIO GARCIA ALVAREZ

HMCS *Ville de Québec* reaches European waters with SNMG1

By Nathan Stone,
Trident Staff

After months of preparation, His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Ville de Québec* and its crew are putting that training into practice as they lead a NATO task group on Operation REASSURANCE.

The Halifax-based frigate departed on July 15 for a planned six-month deployment in European waters. Sailing as the flagship of Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1), the ship is operating alongside Allied navies in the North Atlantic and Baltic Sea, contributing to joint exercises, maritime patrols, and NATO's deterrence mission in Eastern Europe.

Operation REASSURANCE is Canada's ongoing contribution to NATO deterrence measures and includes personnel and capabilities from all three branches of the Canadian Armed Forces.

"For the past six months, the entire crew has been focused on becoming a team and preparing for this mission. Today, HMCS *Ville de Québec* stands ready to answer the call of Canadians and our NATO Allies," said Commander (Cdr) Jason Knowles, the ship's Commanding Officer.

Since departing Halifax, the ship's company has continued to sharpen its skills through a demanding routine of training at sea. Sailors have conducted damage control exercises, weapons training on the flight deck, and casualty-clearing simulations to maintain their readiness while deployed.

The vessel underwent extensive maintenance and workups before sailing and is equipped with advanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities, surface-to-air missiles, and a CH-148 Cyclone helicopter.

Cdr Knowles says *Ville de Québec* excels in its role as a multipurpose frigate and that the crew is eager to demonstrate those capabilities alongside NATO partners.

"The ship can do a little bit of everything really well and can always surge to do the thing that we're needed to do."

He also expects that he and the crew will learn new skills from their allies.

"When we get there, we'll realize that there are things we haven't thought of that somebody else is good at, and that gives us the chance to learn. There's no better place for learning than at the front."

For members of the ship's company on their first major deployment, including Sailor 3rd Class (S3) Joseph Turcotte, a new Naval Communicator, the mission marks an important milestone.

His parents, Tim and Karen Turcotte, were among the family members who gathered on the jetty in Halifax last month to see the ship sail.

"I'm really proud," said Karen. "I never in my life thought that I would be here watching one of the big warships sail away and that my son would be on it."

Since leaving Halifax, the ship has already begun building on international partnerships. One of HMCS Ville de Québec's first port visits was to Glasgow, Scotland, where the crew was welcomed at a civic reception hosted by the Lord Provost of Glasgow.

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PROUDLY CANADIAN

CANFLTANT welcomes new Fleet Chief

By Nathan Stone,
Trident Staff

Canadian Fleet Atlantic (CANFLTLANT) welcomed a new Fleet Chief on July 24 as Chief Petty Officer 1st Class (CPO1) Paul Greene officially took over the role in a ceremony on the flight deck of His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Frédérick Rolette*.

Commander CANFLTLANT, Commodore (Cmdre) Jacob French, presided over the event and highlighted the significance of the Fleet Chief position within the formation.

"If done well, it is a cross-connecting key linchpin in our Navy."

The Fleet Chief is the most senior Non-Commissioned Officer in the fleet. Their primary role is to provide the perspective of the Non-Commissioned Members (NCMs) to senior leadership.

CPO1 Greene succeeded the outgoing CPO1 Patrick Mackey.

Reflecting on his two-year tenure, CPO1 Mackey noted the fleet's high operational tempo.

"We had multiple ships and units deployed in the Indo-Pacific, Mediterranean, Baltic, Caribbean, Arctic, Antarctic, Black Sea, and many other regions around the world."

That tempo is not expected to slow, but CPO1 Mackey expressed confidence in CPO1 Greene's ability to rise to the occasion, calling him "absolutely the right person for the job."

Incoming Fleet Chief CPO1 Paul Greene brings 27 years of experience to his new role, having begun his naval career in 1999 as a Steward. He most recently held the position of Coxswain aboard HMCS *Montréal*.

The new Fleet Chief expressed enthusiasm for the challenges ahead, saying the navy is entering an exciting period with new ships and missions on the horizon.

"It is the people who drive this Navy," he said. "We are going to block out the noise and continue to keep our heads down and deliver on behalf of Canada and Canadians."

He made a point to credit his family for his success, thanking his wife Brandis and their children for their continuing support.

In his new role, CPO1 Greene will be working closely with Cmdre French and the rest of Maritime Forces Atlantic (MARLANT) Command Team.

Cmdre French said he was looking forward to working with CPO1 Greene as Fleet Chief.

"Your job is to be the advisor for the commander and other officers within the chain of command, to be a mentor to the sailors with a firm understanding of their challenges, and the challenges of the coxswains," he said, also noting the Chief's role as an enforcer of standards - not just in the outward things such as dress and deportment, but also culture discipline, safety and readiness.

In executing those duties, Cmdre French described the outgoing CPO1 Mackey as a "completely reliable fireside partner," who consistently addressed the fleet's most complex challenges.

CPO1 Greene said he would "continue down the path," laid by his predecessor and that he feels "honoured," to represent the fleet's NCMs.

"We have great sailors, we have good people, this is a good Navy," he said.

Cdr Tunstall takes command of HMCS *Harry DeWolf*

During HMCS Harry DeWolf's Change of Command ceremony on July 22, Cdr Andrew Tunstall officially assumed command from Capt(N) Collin Forsberg. Capt(N) Forsberg took command of the ship in June 2025, leading HMCS Harry DeWolf through a refit program and sail to Levis, Quebec over the past year. The ceremony was presided over by Cmdre French, Commander Canadian Fleet Atlantic.

LCPL BRIAN LEVESQUE

"That's My Story, and I'm Sticking to It"

Remembering Father John Williams:

The Eastern Passage Boy

By Padre Lt(N) Maxwell Ojukwu,
12 Wing Shearwater

Some people are remembered for the positions they held or the accomplishments they achieved. Father John Williams, who died on June 9, 2026, will be remembered for something far more enduring: the lives he touched.

Born and raised in Eastern Passage, Father John never forgot where he came from. He often described himself with pride as the son of a fisherman, and the sea and nature remained close to his heart throughout his life. Walking along the boardwalk at Fisherman's Cove became one of his favourite pastimes. Parishioners frequently encountered him there, where a simple greeting would soon turn into an engaging conversation. He loved recounting the history of the Passage, pointing out landmarks and telling stories about nearby islands. His passion for local history was contagious. He helped others see familiar places with fresh appreciation.

His curiosity extended far beyond his hometown. Father John followed world events closely and believed that faith should speak to the realities people faced every day. His homilies often began by acknowledging the turmoil of the world — the headlines, conflicts, and uncertainties that filled the daily news. Yet they never ended there. Drawing from Scripture, and his own experiences of pastoral ministry, he gently guided listeners toward hope.

He often told stories, recalling humorous episodes from his childhood in Eastern Passage, reflecting on his travels, or personal experience, and every story carried a lesson without ever feeling like a lecture. He knew that stories opened hearts in ways arguments never could.

One account he treasured involved a sailor whose ship docked during a winter storm. The man, a Muslim married to a Catholic woman, made a habit of visiting Catholic churches that bore the same name as his wife's parish whenever he travelled. That search led him to Father John's parish, where he was welcomed warmly, offered friendship and hospitality without condition. They stayed in touch long after the sailor returned home — a small reminder, Father John liked to say, that a simple act of welcome can mean more than we know.

Father John's connection to the Canadian Armed Forces predated his priesthood. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from St. Dunstan's University while also participating in the Regular Officer Training Program, was commissioned as an officer, and served in Canada and Europe before an honourable discharge to study for the priesthood. He returned to military life in 1983 as a chaplain in the Primary Reserve, eventually serving as Area Chaplain for Land Force Atlantic Area from 1991 with the rank of Major. Though he retired from active service, his bond with the Forces never diminished, and his ministry at Shearwater kept him close to the community he loved.

Even in his final days, that commitment remained evident. Before Trinity Sunday in 2026, illness forced him to consider withdrawing from his scheduled Mass. Yet when he realized no other priest was available, he chose to celebrate the liturgy despite feeling unwell. It proved to be his final Mass with the community he cherished. During a visit shortly before his death, he spoke warmly of his love for the Shearwater congregation and how grateful he was that his ministry there kept him connected to the military family he had served with such devotion throughout his priesthood.

Father John Williams leaves behind no monuments of stone. Instead, he leaves something far more enduring: lives strengthened by compassion, faith deepened through gentle teaching, and a community that learned from his example that holiness is often found in ordinary acts of kindness, patient listening, and steadfast service.

Those who knew him can still hear the familiar words with which he concluded every homily. They were delivered with a smile that reflected both humility and quiet confidence:

"That's my story, and I'm sticking to it."

Members of FDU(A) are seen kicking off last year's Navy Divers 50K Run in support of Christmas Daddies. The 2025 campaign raised a record $33,000, and the divers are aiming for another impressive total for 2026.

MONA GHIZ

Fleet Diving Unit (Atlantic) gets ready for Christmas Daddies fundraiser run

By Griffin Bjerke-Clarke,
Trident Staff

The summer season isn't quite over yet, but Sailor 1st Class (S1) Sam Phillips and the team at Fleet Diving Unit (Atlantic) (FDU(A)) are looking ahead. They're focused on organizing and facilitating an upcoming event that has seen the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) support the long-running Christmas Daddies telethon for the past 43 years.

This year's Navy Divers 50K Run is set for Saturday, October 17.

Despite being three months away, the event demands time to get the word out.

"The more outreach we can get earlier in the year, the better," explains S1 Phillips.

"Last year, we had 35 participants and this year we'd like to surpass that. Each participant brings a hundred dollars with them to donate to the cause; that's a lot of money that really benefits us."

The annual initiative holds an important spot on the FDU(A) calendar, and the team typically goes all out in raising funds that are then used to support struggling children and families across the Maritimes.

In previous years, the relay-style run took participants through downtown Halifax to a finish at CTV's studios. The current 50-kilometre distance adds an extra physical challenge compared to past formats.

"I think there's a push from the young guys at the unit to want to get involved and to make it bigger and better than in years past," continues S1 Phillips.

With the run now open to civilian participants—ten participants joined the FDU(A) divers last year—and increased interactions with the public, the bond between CAF members and the communities they serve is made stronger. Between the October run and December telethon, the divers will also be out at various community "Hotspots," meeting with the public and collecting donations.

S1 Phillips recounted meeting a recipient of support from Christmas Daddies during the divers' visit to CTV studios last year, and said he's looking forward to seeing more of the organization's impact during this year's telethon on December 5. While the run now takes place earlier in the year, the team will still be there in person on telethon day to present their donation.

"She came up to myself and my colleague and was in tears; hugged us both, thanked us for the direct impact. That was my first time seeing the work we do and the money we raise going to someone in particular, and that hit pretty hard. It's definitely been the most satisfying thing."

The Navy Divers 50K Run is scheduled to take place on October 17, with on-site registration opening at 7 a.m. and the run beginning at 8 a.m. at the Shearwater Fitness and Sports Centre, continuing through the scenic Shearwater Flyer, Salt Marsh and Atlantic View Trails and concluding at 3 p.m.

Online registration is currently open to civilians and CAF members. All who wish to join are welcome. To learn more or to sign up, visit FDU(A)'s Race Roster page.

All money raised from participant entry fees or additional fundraising go directly to Christmas Daddies.

Double gold for CFB Halifax at slo-pitch regionals

Both the men's and women's CFB Halifax Mariners teams brought home gold medals from the recent CAF Atlantic Region Slo-pitch Championships, which were hosted by 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown July 20-24. The wins set both teams up to go for gold at the upcoming CAF National Championships, set for September 13-17 at CFB Borden.

SUBMITTED

MacDonald Beach remains open until August 30

By PSP Halifax

There's still plenty of summer left to enjoy at MacDonald Beach in Shearwater, with the beach remaining open daily through August. The final day for public admission will be Sunday, August 30.

The beach is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the gate opening at 10:30 a.m. and closing at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free.

Visitors are reminded that lifeguards will be on duty during operating hours, and swimming is only permitted within the designated supervised area.

Military units looking to host summer gatherings can also reserve the beach's pavilions and barbecue facilities. When they are not booked by a unit, the pavilions are available for public use.

A lifejacket loaner station is available at the lifeguard hut. Visitors should bring their own drinking water, as there is no potable water available on site. Canoes and kayaks may be launched from the designated area, but there are no rentals or motorized boat launches at the beach.

Alcohol and drugs are prohibited on the premises. The beach is also closed on holidays and may occasionally be unavailable due to private military events. Visitors are encouraged to contact the Shearwater Fitness, Sports and Recreation Centre before visiting to confirm availability.

For more information about MacDonald Beach or Shearwater aquatics, contact PSP Halifax Aquatic Coordinator Jacob Miess at Jacob.Miess@forces.gc.ca or 902-720-1777.