



## **CANADIAN PEACEKEEPING VETERANS ASSOCIATION**

### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE AT CHRISTMAS 2009**

As the white blanket of winter spreads across most of this great country of Canada, we prepare for the celebration of Christmas and the holiday season. It seems that only yesterday we were completely occupied with Remembrance Day activities to honour those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and also to participate in comradeship with fellow veterans. Now we have passed the fall equinox and the days will soon begin to get noticeably longer.

Although Christmas is a time for celebration and enjoyment with family and friends, we must remember our Canadian troops who are serving, away from their families, in Afghanistan and other far-away missions all around the world. Above all, we must remember the 133 Canadians killed and the hundreds wounded in Afghanistan.

In addition to being with you at this special time through this message, I want to take an opportunity to provide an update about CPVA matters.

#### **Representation**

The following significant national events had CPVA representation. For Remembrance Day, Larry Gray our 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President laid a wreath on behalf of CPVA at the ceremony at the National War Memorial in Ottawa. Karl Morel and Larry Gray attended the third Royal Canadian Legion unity meeting in Kanata on 31 October while I took part in a Veterans Affairs regional meeting in Ottawa on 16 November. As well, I participated with Ron Griffis, CAVUNP President, in a conference call on 15 December with Keith Coulter, who is doing an independent review of VAC, and I will work with Ron and in consultation with Marlowe Fraser to prepare a joint written presentation for the review.

#### **Advocacy**

Marlowe Fraser bravely continues his demanding work on behalf of Veterans as our Advocacy Director by attending many difficult meetings to represent us. He sacrifices much of his personal life working for Veterans and deserves our gratitude. Marlowe appeared in front of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs on 26 November to give information about various aspects of the New Veterans Charter which is under thorough review. I know from the records of his presentation that he did an outstanding job on behalf of all veterans. While not representing us directly, Tom Hoppe continues to serve as a member of the Veterans Ombudsman's Advisory Committee and we certainly know that we can count on Tom to keep veterans' needs at the forefront. It is also a pleasure to report that our Patron, Larry Gollner, has agreed to share the burden of advocacy work with Marlowe as he did prior to being named as the PPCLI Colonel of the Regiment.

## **Membership**

Wayne Kennedy, our Membership Director, is competently directing and administering membership matters and we are experiencing growth, slowly, but nevertheless growth. It will be necessary for all of us to be CPVA recruiters in order to significantly increase our membership. Please reach out and tell another Veteran about CPVA. We need the strength of credible membership numbers to be able to do our best on behalf of veterans.

## **Communications**

Great results have been achieved in the communications field in the recent past. With the imagination and direction of Karl Morel, Communications Director, and the excellent work of Rodd Kennedy, Webmaster, the CPVA website has been transformed into a very exciting and informative place to visit. I am very happy about their work and we owe them a sincere thank you. As well, Karl has continued to provide current information with his communiqués in his usual highly professional manner. Additionally, Karl has informed me that he plans on publishing the next Blue Beret in January 2010.

Also in the communications context, once again, I want to thank Hugh Message, the President of Surrey V Chapter, for the tremendously valuable service he continues to provide to the entire veterans' community with his Message Centre passage of information.

## **Amalgamation Negotiations Status**

There has been significant movement in the negotiations between CAVUNP and CPVA. Ron Griffis, President of CAVUNP, and I met in Ottawa during the VAC regional meeting and continued discussions about various aspects of the pending union of CAVUNP and CPVA. Ron has indicated that we should be working with a sense of urgency to bring the two organizations together and I agree. To that end, we have sought opportunities to work together as organizations in situations such as collaborating to present a united stand to VAC and other veterans organizations. As well, Ron and I together coordinated the selection of Olympic torchbearers so that we acted as one body to give the maximum number of veterans from our two organizations the possibility to carry the Olympic flame. I thank Ron for his cooperation, assistance and comradeship.

As I have said before, I believe it is the most natural thing for CAVUNP and CPVA, and GWVA, the Blue Berets and possibly others, to enter into some form of union considering the highly homogeneous nature, background and modern-day veteran memberships of the organizations. Although it has almost become a cliché, it is true – united we stand, divided we fall.

## **Olympic Torch Relay**

As I informed the Chapters and Regions in July, VAC was given 120 vacancies for veterans to carry the Olympic flame in the torch relay for the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Winter Games, with six veterans organizations each allocated 20 places. Ron Griffis and I worked together closely, seeking approval from the two Executives as necessary, and eventually filled almost 50 positions. We were highly flexible and did whatever was necessary to maximize our numbers. As an example, Ron, as the CAVUNP President but also a member of CPVA, ran in one of the CPVA vacancies while several other CPVA members participated as part of the CAVUNP list.

Everyone who has completed the run has been highly enthusiastic and positive about the opportunity and most have described it as an honour and once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Some of the notables who were selected to run for CPVA were LGen (Ret'd) Senator Roméo Dallaire, our Patron BGen (Ret'd) Larry Gollner, CPVA Special Advisor, RCMP Chief Superintendent (Ret'd) Michael O'Rielly, former CPVA Presidents Harold Leduc and Dave Munro, Past President Tom Hoppe, Advocacy Director Marlowe Fraser, Communications Director Karl Morel, NL Chapter President Garry Best and MB Regional Chair Dale Lamoureux. The photos of all of our torchbearers will be posted on the CPVA website as they complete their runs.

It is possible to watch the torch relay live via streaming video on the internet from a vehicle mounted webcam at: <http://www.ctvolympics.ca/torch/follow-torch/index.html>

### **Cyprus Excursion**

Garry Best has presented a commendable initiative for a 10 day tour to Cyprus in May 2010. For details, please visit the CPVA website [www.cpva.ca](http://www.cpva.ca) or contact Garry at (709) 834-1434 or [newfoundlandpeacekeepers@hotmail.com](mailto:newfoundlandpeacekeepers@hotmail.com). Thank you very much Garry for creating this great opportunity for Peacekeepers to return to Cyprus with old comrades and a chance to relive many old memories.

### **Conclusion**

I will do my best to continue to update the CPVA membership with new information on a regular basis and request that these updates be widely distributed by the Chapters. It is important for the morale and cohesiveness of the Association that members are kept fully informed of activities and issues. Of course, current and breaking information will be provided by Karl and Hugh. In any case and at any time, please contact me with any questions you have.

The time of Christmas is also an appropriate moment to thank the members of the Executive, the Chapter Presidents, Regional Chairs and appointed Officers for their gift of hard, and often thankless, work for the membership and on behalf of all veterans.

I wish all CPVA members a peaceful and very enjoyable Christmas and a healthy, happy and successful New Year 2010. Please enjoy the holidays safely.

Respectfully,



Ray Kokkonen

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