



Dear Dragoons,

Happy New Year! Over the past few months, there's been quite a bit of change at Regimental Headquarters and we're about to step off into a busy spring, so I thought a note to all of you would be timely.

To begin with, The Regiment is pressing on with necessary training, maintenance and readiness work to ensure that we can fulfill our duties as the 4th Canadian Division Immediate Response Unit until we hand over that task this summer. Since last September, we have maintained a high-readiness posture for this task and, despite the pressures from a demanding training schedule and the ongoing pandemic, we are ready if called to deal with any contingencies. Keeping soldiers engaged and healthy, both physically and mentally, is one benefit of holding this task for as long as we have.

Elements of The Regiment, based primarily around C Squadron, are preparing vehicles and equipment to be shipped to Wainwright for this spring's Exercise MAPLE RESOLVE. Although the bulk of The Regiment will remain in Petawawa rather than participate, we have plenty to keep us busy. C Squadron will provide tank support to the validation of the 1 RCR and 2 RCR Battle Groups and get opportunities to lead their own live fire combat team operations, so we will be well represented in the Army's largest annual field exercise. We are also augmenting the 3 RCR Battle Group in their exercise at the Joint Readiness Training Center in the US, providing Observer Controllers and individual augmentees. Both these exercises provide opportunities for Dragoons to see and be seen at the large scale activities that highlight the Army's training year.

For those of us remaining in Petawawa this spring, our focus will be on maintaining our readiness and building individual skills through courses. Behind these two lines of operations is a supporting priority of maintaining our morale. I'm conscious of the challenges our soldiers face in managing their tasks during the pandemic as well as the impact on families. We extend our Regimental Family to support members when they're in crisis, but there's also a role for the Regimental Family during periods of extended stress, like we're experiencing now. As much as possible, we're maintaining flexibility in terms of how and where soldiers work, balancing the positive mental health aspects that come with working as part of a team. As soon as possible, we will get back to organized sports, social events and the other activities that make part of serving at The Regiment a special time. Those of us who have been posted away from The Regiment know that there's no posting that has the same camaraderie as what we have here—so maintaining this positive feeling through the extended pandemic has been a challenge. When I look back at where we were one year ago, part of The Regiment was getting its feet wet in Latvia, having just arrived to take over the leadership of the enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group. The bulk of The Regiment was back in either Petawawa or Gagetown, building their individual skills, maintaining our vehicles and getting ready to participate in the big show

of collective training through the spring. While COVID impacted our ability to do significant portions of the large exercises, we were successful in adapting our methods to get the best out of every opportunity. Throughout it all, we remained focused on finding ways to get the job done, rather than getting down on ourselves because we couldn't do things the way we'd always done them. Having Soldier's' Appreciation Dinners just prior to the holidays is a perfect example of how we kept the essential elements of team-building and gratitude, adapting to fit the conditions we are under.

Posting season looms large at this time of year and, although posting messages themselves will take more time to be produced, the expectation is that we will see significant turnover in key personnel this year. Getting posted is a disruption, but it's also part of our military lifestyle. As an aside, I want to congratulate LCol Nick Forsyth, who has been announced as the next Commanding Officer! As much as it seems no time at all has passed since I took over in 2020, it's been almost two years already. LCol Forsyth is a fantastic leader who will be well-positioned to take The Regiment forward after change of command this summer.

I want to close with a note of thanks to our unforgettable Muggsie Boland, who retired this month after nearly 35 years of service as the Commanding Officer's Secretary, I'd be hard pressed to find a Dragoon who hasn't been touched by her positive attitude and dedication to our Regimental Family. We will be bringing Muggsie back for a proper farewell at change of command this summer and she'll be remaining engaged with The Regiment even in retirement, but we will miss her presence from day to day in Regimental Headquarters.

I thank all of you for your continued support, whether still serving or as part of the wider Dragoon community. I don't know if we've ever had a more challenging time at maintaining connections between all the various places Dragoons are serving, whether in Petawawa or Gagetown, Wainwright, Ottawa or overseas – all the myriad places springbok badges are seen. It's a testament to our resilience that we sustain this connection through all the disruptions life has brought. Please keep working hard, staying safe and I look forward to a large gathering for change of command this summer, COVID willing!

Audax et Celer! I Bold and Swift!

Enno A. Kerckhoff, MSM, CD  
Lieutenant-Colonel  
58th Commanding Officer