



# THE NECESSITY OF A NAVY

**On 25 November, Parliament Hill will host Navy Appreciation Day 2014, bringing together Parliamentarians, the Royal Canadian Navy, the maritime education sector and the maritime defence industry in an effort to showcase Canada's navy.**

**T**his annual event is sponsored by the Navy League of Canada, a national organization that was founded in 1895 with a broad-based mandate to promote maritime affairs in Canada.

Navy Appreciation Day was born from a personal commitment of a dedicated few to celebrate Canada's Navy and impress upon Parliamentarians the importance of the Navy, its role and, most importantly, its people. As part of the day's activities, there is a Navy Hero program where a collection of exceptional Canadian naval personnel, who quietly make a difference on a daily basis, are recognized.

One may ask in these times of fiscal restraint, why does Canada need a navy? A quick look at a map of Canada graphically illustrates the often unrecognized reality that Canada is indeed a three-ocean maritime nation. Moreover, as a sovereign nation we have a duty to know who is using our waters, whilst maintaining authority by being able to respond quickly and effectively to threats to our national security and sovereignty.

These are not just platitudes. As a sovereign nation Canada must be able to control whatever takes place in the waters under its jurisdiction – Canadian territorial waters, the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf. It is worth noting the legal ramifications

of not maintaining a capability to control ones waters: it is an abrogation of sovereign authority that can impact on bona fide claims over territory and the resources therein – the Canadian Arctic being a case in point.

In a country as vast as ours, where the majority of Canadians live far from the sea, it is easy to lose sight of the importance of maritime issues. But it is our economy, the lifeblood of our nation, that demands free access to the global marketplace and it is through the 324 ports and harbours, over 243,000 kilometres of coastline, that our economy passes daily. In 2010 alone, Canada's international maritime trade accounted for \$170 billion, so it is no surprise that Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2012 opined that "Canada is a maritime nation, a maritime nation with trade, commerce and interests around the world. Surrounded as we are by three oceans, it can truly be said that Canada





and its economy float on salt water.”

The need for domestic maritime security does not alone describe the type of navy Canada needs, because navies offer much more than constabulary roles. Their inherent flexibility allows the government of the day to be able to respond to global situations, natural or man-made, with measured options that reflect the will of the Canadian people. This is why a navy is important to Canada, be it in local waters protecting our trade or implementing our national foreign policy abroad by upholding national and international law governing the use of the oceans.

Our navy must be able to be an effective deterrent in a multitude of situations short of combat whilst always maintaining the ability to exert force should it become necessary to defend Canada and its interests.

Understanding that navies do their business out of the public eye, Canada's navy has significantly contributed to the security of our nation for over one hundred years. It has always been a national institution and from its founding in 1910, through war and peace, it has consistently reflected Canadian values and priorities. Of the three traditional services, it is the navy that is invariably the first responder, be it defending sea-borne trade in the Atlantic during the Second World War against the U-boat attacks, throughout the Cold War against the Soviet ballistic missile submarine threat, post-Cold War operations in

the Persian Gulf in 1990, contributing to the international campaign against terrorism from 2001, or humanitarian operations off Haiti in 2010.

History has shown that a navy must be able to quickly deploy worldwide, without neglecting domestic maritime security and sovereignty. This demands a balanced force that has capabilities above, on and below the oceans to counter threats to global and national security. But a navy is not something that can be purchased “off the shelf” when the need arises; it is a complex organization that must be built and nurtured through constant maintenance and ongoing equipment renewal.

While procurement of navies are expensive, they are truly a national investment that Canadians across the country benefit financially through continued employment in their construction and ongoing maintenance. Thus, it is important to maintain a continuing program of renewal as equipment reaches the end of its service life, even though it may be very expensive. Not doing so can dramatically constrain Canada's future ability to respond to unforeseen situations.

It is easy to forget that Canada has a long tradition of success in shipbuilding and warship modernization programs. From the unparalleled surge in national shipbuilding capacity during the Second World War, through the Cold War construction of 20 destroyer-escorts and four Iroquois-class destroyers, to building the 12 Halifax-class frigates, this nation has proven its capacity to design and build extremely capable and durable ships. Past and present modernization programs have successfully sustained the fleet, and continue to do so today – the ongoing frigate modernization program and the introduction of the Victoria-class submarines are both on track to produce vessels that will give Canada an unparalleled range of options into the next decade.

What are the likely future maritime interests for Canada? While any accurate prediction is impossible, it is fairly certain that there will be security issues facing Canada, be they man-made or from natural causes, and there will always be a role for a strong, balanced navy that reflects Canada's global position.

Areas such as the fisheries, environmental

pollution, countering illegal immigration and criminal activities such as narcotics smuggling, as well as protecting our ability as a nation to trade freely by getting Canadian goods to the global market are foreseen. Furthermore, the switch to “just-in-time” delivery of goods, instead of stockpiling, means the Canadian economy depends on predictable shipping cycles and countering those situations that would interrupt these cycles – an example being counter piracy operations in the ocean choke-points of the world.

Finally, there remains an unstable world with changing threats: 70 percent of the planet is covered by ocean, 80 percent of the world's population lives near these oceans, and 90 percent of global trade moves through these oceans. This is not lost on new and emerging economies, where heretofore non-maritime focused nations are rapidly investing in navies, particularly submarines. Canada must maintain the ability to protect our maritime interests from international threats and a navy is the means whereby we can exercise control over areas that are in our national interest.

Navy Appreciation Day 2014 is an opportunity to remind Parliamentarians of Canada's maritime vulnerability and how a navy enforces our claims of sovereignty. As former Prime Minister Paul Martin noted earlier this year, “If any single country characterizes our blue planet, it's Canada. It's not just that we have the longest coastline and border three oceans. We have substantial ocean research capabilities; we are a major exporter by sea; we have the world's eighth-largest fishing and seafood industry; and our companies are active players in the oil and gas industries and more recently, seabed mining. It is only logical that Canada should play a proactive, forward-looking role in ocean protection and governance.”

Wise words indeed, but to do this Canada needs to maintain the capability to react to a broad spectrum of maritime threats – and that is why we need a navy. ■

**Capt (Ret'd) Norm Jolin** is a former naval officer who retired from the Royal Canadian Navy after 37 years of service in 2011. He is currently an independent defence and strategic analysis consultant.