

Office of Director RCEME
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2

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5 June 2020

EX BLUEBELL 2020 LETTER



RCEME technicians and officers,

1. This black swan event has very much been a major disruptor to both our personal and professional lives. This ranges from those that are deployed in support of OP LASER, those who are now working from home and to others who are ‘on-call’ to assist. The latter is equally important, for as a force of last resort, we cannot fail.

2. The requirement to protect the health of the Canadian Armed Forces, has brought with it force protection measures which has greatly affected the normal RCEME springtime campaign. It has prompted the cancellation of rolling BLUEBELLS; diminished regional events; and has greatly reduced the celebration of change of commands and change of appointments, ceremonies that in the past would have recognized these important milestones. COVID-19 restriction does not however reduce the significance and importance of these events.

3. It is difficult to believe that only a year ago the first of many large scale events across Canada had begun to celebrate our Corps’ 75th anniversary. This year’s events were always planned to be smaller in scale and have been even further reduced in light of COVID-19. Despite this, I have been amazed to see the display of *esprit de corps* through creative initiatives at multiple levels all across our country, proving that our Corps cannot be silenced nor can our enthusiasm be quelled.

4. First and most importantly, the Corps SM and I would like to recognize and celebrate our national and regional award winners. While we would far rather have had the privilege of presenting these in person, we trust that you will be suitably presented this award on your return to work. The credibility of our Corps has been built by individuals such as yourselves and you have our complete admiration. Congratulations to the following winners:

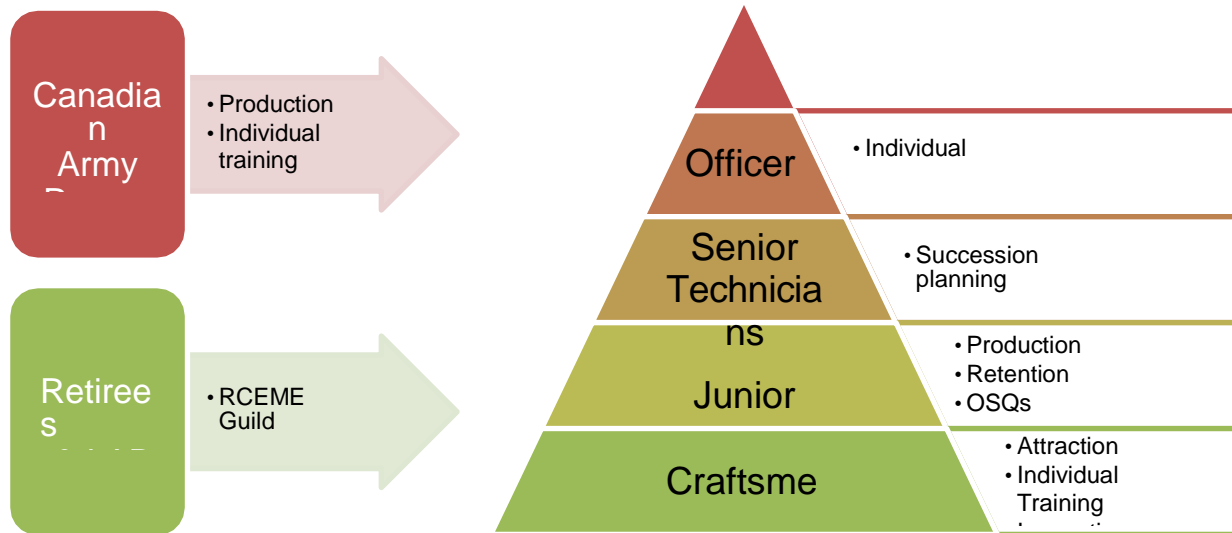
D RCEME National Awards

National	Cpl M. Toutant (Central)
Reserve	Cpl Donnie Henry (Atlantic)
Retiree	Capt (Ret’d) D. David (East)
Cadet	Cadet WO Bitang-Anoko (East)

Regional Awards

West	MCpl K. Shields Sgt P. Boivin
Central	Cpl M. Toutant Cpl J.L. Wiebes
East	Sgt N. Pelletier Capt T. Geoffroy
Atlantic	Sgt B. Montreuil
NCR	Sgt T. Purcell

5. The Corps SM and I are both very excited as we fix our gaze on the future. A detailed blueprint will follow that centers on this year's BLUEBELL theme: "RCEME azimuth check". It is intended to outline the most important upcoming milestones and will also provide a general update on the initiatives that our Corps is currently engaged in. Some of the key milestones and initiatives that the Corps has in progress are depicted below:



6. Craftsmen. There is a large number of vacant positions which has been further exasperated by the temporary pause in recruiting and training throughput. The RCEME Corps is working at ensuring that training meets the needs of the CA and on filling this void through the attraction and training of more technicians in the near future.

- a. Attraction. 2019/2020 recruitment out-performed all previous years and was on track to meet the intake requirements for Weapons, Materials and Electro-Optronic Technicians and exceed the highest number of Vehicle Technicians recruited in the last five years, prior to the pause imposed by COVID-19. Once recruitment fully resumes, the Corps needs to be invested in improving attractions, specifically within the Vehicle Technician and Electro-Optronic Technician occupations.
- b. Individual Training. Training at the RCEME School is expected to resume at the end of June or in early July incrementally with the expectation to be fully functional in September. The School is developing a plan to ensure that it can meet production requirements while providing a safe-environment to students in accordance with Public Health safety protocols. The ultimate objective is to resume IT as fast as feasible while at the same time looking at new pathways to streamline training for the candidates to obtain their qualifications.
- c. Innovation Centers. The vision for On-Job-Training (OJT) centers sees a much larger role for them to play to ensure our future leaders and technicians remain proficient and empowered to adapt to emerging technologies. These *innovation centers* will serve as an important hub in the reach back matrix we are looking to establish that will provide technicians with a virtual network within which technical issues can be shared and resolved and a reservoir of best practices can be stored.

7. Junior technicians. Our technicians at the Cpl/MCpl rank are vital to ensuring workshop production and we remain committed to ensuring that they are given sufficient training to accomplish their tasks, are able to focus on direct labor and are sufficiently staffed to reduce work fatigue.

- a. Production. The CA is looking at multiple solutions to manage the lack of personnel with the increasing production requirements inherent in our aging fleets and the complexities that will come with future highly technical platforms. The Canadian Army Sustainment Review (CASR) is already setting targets and growing the equipment culture will be a key component of this review. Part of the solution is modernizing support to reflect the needs of the unit in garrison. The intent is and has always been to maximize the time afforded to our junior technicians to be working on the shop floor.
- b. Retention. The attrition rate of RCEME occupations is one of the lowest in the CAF. That said, 15-20% of the positions remain unfilled. Improving the attraction and retention of our technicians is a priority for the Corps.
- c. Occupation Specialty Qualifications (OSQs). OSQs remain a priority to ensure that technicians are properly trained to support operational requirements and specific fleets. The Corps is reviewing options to minimize the impact this has, one of which could see technicians with specific OSQs remaining in the same unit longer than their unqualified peers in order to support a unique fleet, such as those with the Leopard OSQ.

8. Senior Technicians.

- a. Succession planning. The focus remains on developing tier 4 tactical leadership appointments at the rank of CWO (unit RSM, School RSM, Tech Svc RSM).
- b. MES impact. The MES review introduced the LEET occupation which will be the receptor trade for all four NCM occupations at the rank of Warrant-Officer. Current DP3 and DP4 courses will be enhanced and refocused to meet the needs of senior technicians having a broadened technical advisor role within a formation. The move to new qualifications will not impact the rate of promotions.

9. Officers

- a. Individual Training. DP1 was reformatted into DP1.1 being the field phase and DP1.2 being the administration phase. The pilot course ran successfully in 2018 and 2019. The RCEME School continues to develop and improve of course material for DP 1.2. Officer DP2, known in the past as the RCEME AOC, will be divided into ODP 2.1, a pre-Maint O course and ODP 2.2 a senior Captain course. ODP 2 has principally been redesigned to meet the needs of a Land Equipment Engineering (LEE) officer. The pilot ODP 2.1 is planned for March 2021.

10. Canadian Army Reserves

- a. Employment. The Canadian Army is more than ever committed in working with a Total Force approach. The Mission Tasks (MT) have already given a greater role to the Army Reserve as they now possess unique capabilities within a deployed role. Current projects are aimed at providing the resources (MRT, tooling) to the reserve Svc Bns in order for them to deploy with Reg F units augmented by ARes personnel and equipment.
- b. Production. The intent of the Corps is to improve the integration of the Army Reserves with a view to augmenting their production capability and to increase the skill retention opportunities to DP1 and DP2 qualified reserve technicians. DRMIS implementation is also part of the strategy as we look to enable the Reserve workshop in providing maintenance support to their brigades.
- c. Individual Training (IT). Res IT in the recent past has been very fluid as was seen through the implementation of STAR and its transition to Operationalizing the Army Reserve. This will continue and with future changes covering the development of DP2 qualifications to enable Vehicle Technicians to provide first line maintenance to TAPVs, LUVWs and the MSVS.

11. Retirees.

- a. RCEME Guild. The RCEME Guild has grown in the past four years to support initiatives benefiting Reg F, Res and retirees of the RCEME Corps. The RCEME Gazette was published in January 2020 and is available on the website. The Guild continues to work on increasing and improving the benefits afforded to members. These should soon be visible as the Guild has taken steps to strengthen its partnership with CANEX and is seeking more civilian partners to provide members with numerous benefits and options such as insurance coverage.
- b. Total Force. We now have ten Light Aid Detachments (LADs) across Canada leading events like: the RCEME Golf tournament; social activities; guest speaker presentations; and more. The RCEME Guild, Foundation and Museum are key elements in our Total Force and are, in essence, force multipliers when it comes to honoring our proud legacy and strengthening an *esprit de corps* which continues to be second to none.

12. The rapid advance of technology has and will continue to shape our Corps. We need to embrace the changes in order to remain relevant to the CAF and to challenge our members. Beyond this, we must continue to strengthen our *esprit de corps* through increasing the benefits provided to members of the Guild, growing the connection to our LADs and maintaining our numerous activities and initiatives wherever members of the Corps are employed.

13. This is truly an unprecedented time, however, history illustrates that our Corps has thrived in similar situations and I am confident that this will be no different. In fact, technicians across Canada have been busy fabricating face coverings for future use of DND members and I've heard of junior leaders leading the 3D production of plastic straps to improve the fit of these masks for frontline workers. From my azimuth check I have great confidence in the future of our Corps, how we will embrace technology to emerge as a crucial component to the success of the CAF. There can be no doubt that our personal and professional lives will be changed forever as a result of COVID-19. That said, in the long-term, this stressful and challenging period will simply be another chapter in the proud and storied history of our Corps.

14. Remain strong, rely on your peers. Our *esprit de corps* is unmatched and we will continue to call on your leadership and energy in these times and as we forge our future.

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N.P.M. Corriveau
Colonel
Director RCEME

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J.H. Saunders
Chief Warrant Officer
Corps Sergeant-Major