



December 2008

CME Branch Advisor's Message

Fellow Engineers,

It has now been several months since I was appointed Branch Advisor to the CME. I am honoured with the appointment and to be able serve the Branch in this capacity. It has been a tremendously rewarding period during which I have had the opportunity to meet with many members of the Branch, conduct several unit visits and recently chaired CME Branch Council. I am forwarding this Chimo Communique to advise you of what I have been doing on your behalf, what I have seen and heard, and provide you with a snapshot into recent Branch Council discussions.

I have had the opportunity to visit CFSME as well as combat engineers, firefighters and construction engineers serving the Army, Navy and Air Force, both regular force and reserve. I have represented the CME at several conferences and working groups and have humbled to accept, on behalf of the CME, many words of condolence for the losses to the Branch in August.

First of all let me tell you how impressed I am with the work that is being done by Branch-wide. We are working cohesively at all levels from senior staff through to unit level preparations of all engineer components deploying on operations. We are working in joint organizations that are stretching across all CME trades from all environments. Your efforts are being appreciated and it is widely acknowledged that the engineer skill sets you are bringing to the fight around the globe are a significant contributor to the success the CF is having on operations.

CME members and their families are paying a considerable price, and as we are all too aware, some have made the ultimate sacrifice with their lives, in support of CF operations. It is the responsibility of all members of the Branch to do everything possible in ensuring we provide the care and support to deployed member's families, and that our returning wounded members are provided with the unit and Branch wide support they need and deserve.

At the recent CME Branch Council we discussed current and future challenges as well as the issue of attrition and retention. The next several years will continue to pose challenges for the CME and the CF. The high operational tempo will continue. We will continue to be fully



engaged supporting CF operations in Afghanistan as we prepare to support the Olympics in 2010 followed by the G8 Summit.

Concurrently we will ensure the Branch is well postured for the future. Our Branch governance needs to be reviewed as does our Strategic Intent to help all Engineers understand where we are going as a Branch and what we need to achieve to get there. We will continue to work with all levels of headquarters and the Army, Navy and Air Force to identify Post CF Transformation gaps in the Branch's ability to provide consistent advice and deliver engineer support across the CF today and into the future. We need to ensure we understand those gaps and take steps through internal engineer cooperation to address them, and capitalize on initiatives such as the Defense Force Structure Review to correct them.

We must ensure we are ready for the post 2011 operational climate in light of the rapidly changing global security environment. In doing so, we must rationalize our Branch core competencies and ensure we are applying lessons learned from current operations. As threats and operating environments change, we must ensure we are providing our soldiers with the right doctrine, training and equipment to execute engineer tasks in future operational theatres.

Branch Council endorsed Chief Military Personnel's (CMP) plan to address attrition and retention. We will continue to stay proactive internally by encouraging our releasing members to stay engaged as civilians or reservists, and staffing CFSME with the right people to increase training capacity. All CME members/leaders need to be responsible for addressing career dissatisfiers leading to attrition. Ensuring our people are challenged in their duties and work in an environment that values and recognizes their efforts and contributions is an essential element. At all levels of the CME, we must foster a retention culture and understand the negative factors contributing to attrition – and correct them. Concurrently, CMP is looking at broad array of policies and programs to encourage CF members to stay past the 3 year and 20 year marks, which are currently gateways through which we are losing considerable numbers. Reducing the attrition of our members is an important means to managing tempo and retaining the valuable experience and skills of engineers in the CF.

As the Branch Advisor and focal point for Branch ethos and professional identity I can report to you that all is well. Thanks to significant efforts from our retired members over the past few years, CME History Volume 4 research is drawing to a close and writing will commence in 2009. Our CME museum in Gagetown continues to develop both in content and organization and is seeing visit numbers that are higher than ever. CME history and heritage continues to thrive in the Chilliwack area. Branch Council recently supported and provided input into a Canada Lands Commission development plan for the All Sappers Memorial originally dedicated in 1946. We are taking steps to develop the CMEA into what you want it to be, and what the Branch needs it to be, while embracing our many units and retired member organizations. I have asked the President to develop a clear set of targets where the CMEA needs to be involved on behalf of the Branch, such as: maintenance of our memorials, support for our wounded soldiers and guardians of our Branch history. Your support and contributions are an important part of this.

In closing, I encourage all members of the CME to continue to undertake those activities that foster Branch esprit de corps and contribute to Branch cohesiveness in 2009. Continue to do those things that give us the opportunity to take a moment, enjoy Engineer camaraderie and reflect on our considerable accomplishments. CME Birthday events, professional development



activities or sporting and social events are all valuable venues that promote the welfare and esprit de corps of the CME Family.

I wish all of our men and women in uniform, our civilian employees and their families all the very best for the holiday season and a prosperous 2009. Whether you are providing engineer support at home or abroad - look after one another, look after your families and in particular reach out to the families who will be separated from their spouses over this holiday period. To those members who will be deployed over the holiday season, know that you will be in the thoughts of all members of the CME and we send you our best wishes for a successful completion to your mission and safe return home in 2009.

Chimo!

J.G. Wall  
Colonel  
CME Branch Advisor