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## Our 121<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Canadian Military Engineer Branch

On this 29 April 2024, we celebrate the 121<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Canadian Military Engineer Branch. Additionally, 2024 is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Normandy Invasion, where our military engineers played a decisive role in breaching the complex obstacles emplaced along the beaches by German forces. Subsequently, Canadian military engineers ensured the mobility of Allied forces in repelling the occupying forces. This year is also the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Master-Corporal Mark 'Izzy' Isfeld from 1 Combat Engineer Regiment. During a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia, Izzy began the tradition of giving dolls to children affected by war. To commemorate his tragic death during that mission, his mother continued his initiative by knitting and donating *Izzy dolls* to ease the suffering of children around the world. Despite her own death in 2006, this initiative continues under the leadership of Shirley O'Connell, the 'Izzy doll mama'. This summer, the Canadian Defence Attaché (CDA) in Paris, a Military Engineer, will engage with 80 mayors from across France during ceremonies commemorating their city's liberation by the Allies during the Second World War. The spouse of the CDA has undertaken a project with the help of the *Izzy doll mama* and the financial support of our Canadian Military Engineers Association (CMEA) to donate an *Izzy doll* in a shadow box to each mayor, to be displayed in their respective city's townhall.

The CMEA also supports our members and their dependents pursuing post-secondary education with bursaries of \$2000 each. For the first time ever this fall, the CMEA will award twelve bursaries instead of nine, thanks to our Association's healthy financial status. These bursaries are named after Military Engineer heroes and this year, three of them are from the Second World War. Consult the following site for more information: [Bursary Program | CMEA \(cmea-agmc.ca\)](https://www.cmea-agmc.ca/Bursary-Program)

Current events around the world continue to be very concerning but, as was the case during the Normandy Invasion in 1944, our predecessors have set the example for us to follow: They made us proud by successfully facing all challenges with courage and determination. From my visits across Canada as well as Operations Unifier and Reassurance in Europe, the fundamental importance of your contribution to Canadian Armed Forces' operations is clear. I take pride in your accomplishments and your readiness to face any challenge. Canada needs you now more than ever. Happy 121<sup>st</sup> Anniversary.

Chimo!

MGen (Ret'd) Daniel Benjamin, CMM, CD  
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