The Engineer Branch alive and well in Rouyn-Noranda

by : Capt Wetson Werleigh, PAFFO 34th Combat Engineer Regiment (CER)

7th September 2013 was a special day in Rouyn-Noranda (Qc). After four years as the Officer Commanding (OC) of 9th Engineer Squadron, Major Francis Moreau passed the torch to Major André Desrochers. His arrival underlined a very special change of command for two reasons: Major Desrochers started his career in the Canadian Armed Forces with this detachment but he also became one of many regular force members posted as commander of 9th Engineer Squadron. The presence of a regular force Major commanding 9th Engineer Squadron demonstrates the investment and interest of the Engineer Branch in this Northern Quebec unit. The events that day were marked with emotion and simplicity. For the occasion, a few former commanders of 9th Engineer Squadron were present but without a doubt, the most noticed presence was that of Major-General Christian Rousseau.

Major Desrochers receives the command of the 9th Engineer Squadron, symbolised by the Commander's sword.
From left to right; LCol Doré, Commander 34th CER, Major Desrochers and Major Moreau.

The 9th Squadron from Rouyn-Noranda and 3 Field Engineer Regiment from Westmount (Montréal) were amalgamated in 2009 to form 34th Combat Engineer Regiment. Questioned on this situation, the new commander of 9th Engineer Squadron declared: « Certainly, we have lost some autonomy and independence but overall the advantages outweigh the inconvenience. The amalgamation provides new possibilities and increases our visibility, particularly considering our geographical location, north of the province. Furthermore, being the only military detachment in the vast region of Abitibi-Témiscamingue, our capability to host military training in remote regions is a clear advantage for the regiment and even 34th Canadian Brigade Group. » 34th CER Commanding Officer; LCol Benoit Doré (now a reservist but having also served at 9th Engineer Squadron as a member of the regular force) intends to capitalize on this situation. The sappers from Montreal and Rouyn-Noranda have very distinct attributes and cultures that complement each other well and that should facilitate operational efficiency.

Major-General Rousseau inspects the troops of the Rouyn detachment with (to the left) 34th CER Honorary Colonel; Colonel Raymond Giguère.

Major Desrochers volunteered for this posting following a three year posting in Europe at the « Military Engineering Centre of Excellence ». Major Moreau leaves the command of the Rouyn-Noranda detachment to take the position of Deputy Commanding Officer (DCO) of 34th CER (a position that was not accessible to members of Rouyn-Noranda before the amalgamation of the units) and begin a career as a law enforcement officer with the Quebec provincial police, the Sûreté du Québec.

We wish best of luck for Major Moreau in his new career as a law enforcement officer with the Sûreté du Québec and much success to the new OC of 9th Engineer Squadron, Major Desrochers.

Major-General Rousseau receives the coin engraved in effigy of the 9th Squadron of 34th CER. From left to right: Major Desrochers, Major Moreau, Major-General Rousseau, Master Warrant Officer Pierre Dion SSM of 9th Engineer Squadron.