

The Schools of Military Engineering

The first Canadian “School of Military Engineering” was authorized in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in July 1907 and included such components as a Construction School, Electrical School, Mechanical School, Field Works Division, and a Telegraphy School.

That school operated in Halifax until the start of the First World War, when it was closed for the duration of the war. It re-opened in Halifax in August 1927 as “The Royal Canadian School of Military Engineering.”

At the start of the Second World War, the school was transferred to the Active Service Force and renamed: “The Royal Canadian Engineer Training Center.” Moved to Camp Petawawa, Ontario, in June 1940, it was renamed “A5 - Canadian Engineer Training Center” in February 1942 and operated until October 1945. In April 1941, a second school, “A6 - Canadian Engineer Training Center,” was established in Dundurn, Saskatchewan to meet the increasing demand for trained sappers. In April 1942, it was moved to Camp Chilliwack, British Columbia.



When the Army was reduced to a small Permanent Force after the war, the A6 CETC was re-established as “The Royal Canadian School of Military Engineering” in October 1946. Some 40 years later, its role was significantly expanded in December 1968 to meet the needs of the former Navy and Air Force within the newly unified Canadian Armed Forces. It was renamed “The Canadian Forces School of Military Engineering”, and operated in Chilliwack for another 30 years. In January 1998, the school was moved to CFB Gaagetown, New Brunswick, on the closure of CFB Chilliwack.

In its new location, CFSME is the busiest school at the Combat Training Centre. Annually, it trains some 1500 students conducting 135 courses for 13 different Military Occupations, with course lengths varying from five days to nine months.

The School teaches various trades courses for Non-Commissioned members who will return to CFSME for additional technical training throughout their careers. In addition to Sapper training, courses encompass the construction trades of Carpentry, Electrician, Plumber, Drafting and Survey, the mechanical trades of HVAC, Electrical Distribution, Water & Fuel storage and distribution, Environmental, and specialties such as the operation of earth-moving equipment and the handling of Improvised Explosive Devices. CFSME also runs all Conventional Munition Disposal and Improvised Explosive Device Disposal training for the Canadian Forces. In addition, CFSME is the Centre of Excellence for combat diving.

Officers receive their engineering degree from the Royal Military College or other universities and receive their basic Officer training at the Infantry School before undertaking Military Engineering Officer training at CFSME. Commissioned Officers return to CFSME for Advanced Training later in their careers.

Training continues to evolve to meet the changing needs. Since the opening of the School of Military Engineering in 1907, officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and sappers of both the Regular and the Reserve Forces have undergone training at one of its locations. Through this contribution, trained Engineers have been provided for two world wars, the Korean War and numerous United Nations and NATO operations, as well as the day-to-day operations of the Canadian Forces.