

17 April 2020: Letter from the Chief of the Defence Staff regarding COVID-19

Dear Families and Members of the Canadian Armed Forces,

Thanks to all of you, whether you have been deployed or working safely at your unit or dispersed at home, we have experienced a very low rate of infection in the CAF and those who have become infected have so far been recovering back to good health. I commend you all for your discipline and focus as we continue to preserve Force health and take the steps necessary to be ready for just about anything.

COVID 19 Response

Leadership at all levels are coordinating with local officials and military personnel will be made available for a range of local support tasks to help ensure our communities remain resilient. Across Canada, Regional Task Forces, RCN ships, and an Air Component have been prepared as we work towards allocating to CJOC up to 24,000 CAF personnel, healthy and ready, when needed. Most recently, we have received and responded to Requests for Assistance (RFA) in both Basse-Côte-Nord and Nunavik with Canadian Rangers. Work includes establishing triage and assessment sites and promoting COVID-19 awareness programs. Additionally, a team of Dental Technicians is helping the province of Ontario conduct contact tracing and, beginning this weekend, special medical teams will begin supporting the Government of Quebec to stabilize the situation in Long Term Care Facilities. We are also doing vital work in transporting medical supplies and our professional logisticians are playing a key role in the warehousing, management, and distribution of medical supplies throughout Canada in support of the Public Health Agency.

We are repositioning personnel and assets from and within our overseas missions to ensure force protection. Both CFB Trenton and the Royal Military College in Kingston are currently hosting personnel from Op Unifier and Op Impact for their two-week preventative isolation. I want to thank all those who continue to provide support to personnel in these locations.

Personnel and Training

Our individual and collective training programs are almost entirely shut down, and will remain so until our plans to recommence safely have been finalized. I think it is safe to say that our colleges and schools across the CAF will remain closed for training through the summer. We are doing detailed planning to re-open, and I expect we may have to expand our intake and individual training capacity in the months to come so we can continue to grow the CAF as we have been directed to do.

CANFORGENs have been issued recently to ensure broad awareness of policies affecting our members and their families during this difficult time. We will soon be issuing CANFORGENs in the following four areas: an update on PERs and succession management boards; promotions; compensation and benefits, and Reserve Force employment; and, Residential Housing Units. It is important that each of you read and understand how policies affect you. If you have any questions or concerns, I encourage you to address these through your respective Chains of Command. The Administrative Response Centre (ARC) team is also here to help you. You can contact them at 1-833-445-1182 or by email at CMPARC.CRACPM@forces.gc.ca.

For those seeking to re-enroll in the CAF and/or those seeking to join, we are open for business; we are well postured to receive applications and to expedite the processing where feasible. Innovative recruiting solutions are in place and virtual enrolments are happening across Canada. To all those who are interested in joining us in service to Canada, you can apply now at [Forces.ca](https://forces.ca) and get to the front of the virtual line for enrolment, or re-enrolment for those who have previously served. We are particularly interested in re-enrolling leadership (Sr NCOs), skilled trades, medical personnel, and pilots.

To our own Health Services staffs, our Search and Rescue squadrons, our NORAD response squadrons, our cyber defence and communications teams, our Leadership in command and control teams in headquarters across Canada and around the world, our logistics and administration staffs, our deployed forces, our Military Police, and our CAF families managing the home front - a sincere thank you. As we stand on guard for Canada, and prepare for operations, there are some who have not been able to disperse or work from home. Military power is made up of many types of skills from many types of people and I am deeply grateful for the expertise, leadership, and dedication in our Regular, Reserve, and Canadian Rangers as we defend and protect Canada during this pandemic.

I want to close by reminding you that doing all you can to stay healthy and not contract the virus is part of your military obligation now. Detailed attention to physical distancing, hygiene, use of PPE where you cannot assure yourself of physical distance, and staying home when you can are mandatory parts of your role as a military member. One person testing positive can have a significant impact on the availability for operations of their colleagues they work with, as anybody in contact must be isolated to prevent spread.

Everyone must follow the direction and guidance given, and not become a threat to your colleagues and their families.

I thank you and your families for staying the course.

J.H. Vance
General