



Cutline: Members of the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team based at Camp Nathan Green near Kandahar City in Afghanistan display the Halifax Regional Municipality flag. (Contributed photo)

Thank you for reading me again. This week, as you'll see, my column has a military theme.

I'd like to start by welcoming home the crews of HMCS Halifax and HMCS Athabaskan after their relief mission to Haiti.

The hundreds of men and women were part of a massive international effort to supply humanitarian and medical aid to the Caribbean country devastated by a huge

earthquake in January. More than 200,000 people died in the quake and countless homes were destroyed.

Few of us can appreciate the toll a disaster of this magnitude takes on those trying to help. I understand that one of the most emotionally draining aspects of this particular mission was dealing with the large number of children who needed comfort and assistance.

Needless to say, once again, the Canadian military has done our country proud. Hats off to all those men and women involved and also to the families who were left behind but who gave their loved ones full support from afar during this vital mission.

I have written to the crews, conveying on behalf of us all our congratulations and gratitude for a job well done. They embody the very best of our community values and we are proud to be able to have them call us home.

□□□□

On a related note, I received greetings the other day from Afghanistan. They were from the commander of the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team based at Camp Nathan Green near Kandahar City, a prime target of insurgents.

With the message was a photo showing members of the military holding a large HRM flag which was to be flown at the entrance to the base.

The flag was taken to Afghanistan by Patti Givogue of Dartmouth who was deployed there with the Canadian Forces. Patti's tour was over in January and care of the flag passed to Sgt. Tanya Casey of Halifax.

Tanya will return to Canada in May, bringing the well-travelled HRM flag with her.



Just a reminder that this is the Centennial of the Canadian Navy and, since HRM is its home port on the East Coast, there will be lots happening here this year.

The first major event will be May 4, the actual date of the anniversary, when the Governor General is expected to declare Navy Centennial Day across the country.

That same day here in HRM, I shall issue a proclamation on behalf of Regional Council recognizing the date as Navy Centennial Day throughout the municipality. In addition, Maritime Forces Atlantic will be granted the Freedom of the City.

About 1,000 naval personnel will march from the Naval Dockyard to City Hall to witness the double ceremony. It will be one of the largest military parades Halifax has seen in some time. I welcome you to join us at 10 a.m., here in the Grand Parade.

The most significant naval Centennial event will be International Fleet Review Week, set for June 28- July 2. Thousands of sailors from seven nations will be in port to help the Canadian Navy mark its special birthday.

I am sure these and other Centennial celebrations which I'll mention in future columns will demonstrate the bonds of friendship and respect which have developed over the years between HRM residents and our sailors.



And finally, a reminder that Earth Hour happens this Saturday, starting at 8:30 p.m.

By the simple act of turning off lights for an hour that evening, resident of HRM and millions more people around the globe hope to encourage world leaders to reach agreement on climate change.

The World Wildlife Fund, which helped create Earth Hour, will host a special event in the Grand Parade this Saturday, starting at 7:30 p.m., an hour before the big “switch-off.” Among the entertainers taking part will be ECMA award winning acts, Sons of Maxwell and Dave Gunning.

I'll be there and I do hope you can make it as well.

Reach me here at City Hall at kellyp@halifax.ca or by phoning me at 490-4010. You're also most welcome to join me on my Facebook or Twitter pages.