



# Chief of Military Personnel Newsletter

July 2014  
Volume 2, Number 12

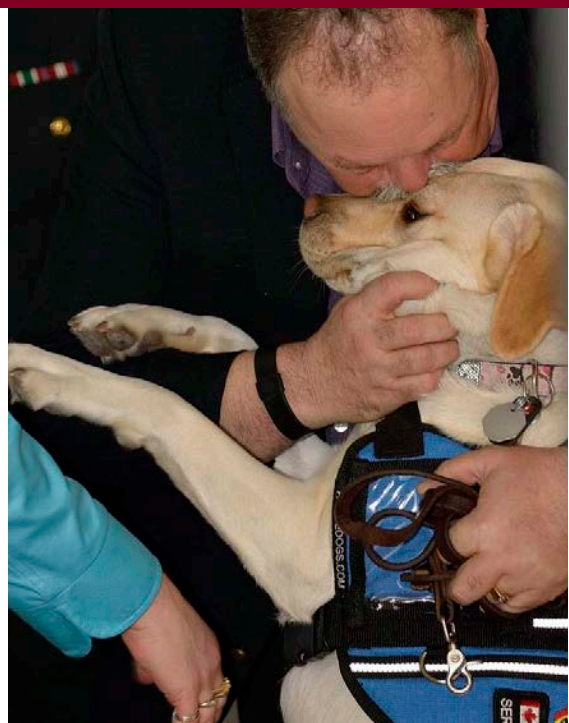
## Eyes Wide Open: Questions to ask yourself before getting a service dog

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As many of you are aware there is an immense amount of media attention being shone on the subject of service dogs for those who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Much to some people's chagrin, I am partly responsible for this since I have strongly and vociferously advocated for their use. The reason is quite simple. Two years ago, I was paired with my service dog, Thai, and she has had a dramatic impact on my life. In fact, my family credits her with my largest battle victories in my war with post-traumatic stress disorder that stretches back decades.

But there is a serious rub: getting paired with a service dog is going to have a huge impact on your life in ways that you may never have considered. The purpose of this article is to point some of the issues out and provide the basis for the start of the decision tree in regards to obtaining and living with a service dog.

First, let me point out a very important point: A service dog is not the panacea that is going to fix all that is wrong in your world if you suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. A service dog



Capt (Ret) Medic "Cous" Cousineau, and his service dog, Thai.

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is an adjunct therapy, to be used in conjunction with traditional therapies, such as counselling and medications. In a follow up article, I will discuss the upside, which is not insignificant, but first, I owe it to you to point out considerations that you may not have thought about, or if you have, may not appreciate the magnitude of or the level of commitment required.

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So here are five questions that you need to consider before obtaining a service dog:

1. Are you prepared for the financial commitment that can last from ten to fifteen years?
2. Are you ready for the 24-7-365 needs of your service animal, no exceptions?
3. Are you willing to accept the responsibility for continuing the training required for your service dog?
4. Are you prepared to deal with conflict?
5. Are you ready to become a focal point of attention in public?

In the interest of brevity, I will try and address the points succinctly and the responses are by no means exhaustive.

**Financial Considerations:** Beyond the initial costs of obtaining a service dog, there is an ongoing financial commitment including food, grooming, toys and veterinarian care.

**Daily Needs:** Your service dog will need feeding, exercise, play time and to be taken out to attend to the calls of nature. This is every single day, no exceptions, rain or shine. Additionally, does your housing situation lend itself to life with a dog?

**Continuation Training:** Your service animal will have an amazing skill-set and those skills need to be practiced and expanded upon. A significant component of their training centers on public access training, and you as the handler have an obligation to ensure that your service dog has the opportunity to practice those skills. Additionally, your dog is a living, sentient being that will, in time, try and exert its personality into the team dynamic and this is not always positive. This will require oversight on your part to ensure your partner does not develop bad habits.

**Conflicts:** Even though your rights for public access with your service dog are protected by law, there is still a huge segment of society that is unaware of those protections. You must be

prepared to deal with the ensuing confrontations when somebody, somewhere inevitably challenges your rights. If you struggle with anger management problems as I do, you have got to be prepared. It happens, sadly, far too frequently, and as service dogs for dealing with invisible disabilities become more widespread, hopefully the situations will diminish or, in time, completely dissipate.

**Attention trap:** Perhaps the single worst thing you can ever hope to do is hide in public with a service dog. I can tell you from firsthand experience that this is not going to happen, period. Service dogs attract attention from kids and adults in every single place that you will go. Since your service dog will accompany you to places that dogs are not traditionally seen, you will attract attention and not all of it positive (see point above). Furthermore you will have to be prepared to become a service dog statesman and mental health ambassador as you will often get asked questions that would never have arisen before obtaining your service dog. In short, you will be turning an invisible issue into something very concrete and unavoidably real. The service dog school will help you prepare for these eventualities but they cannot cover every possible scenario, and you will be the center of attention, like it or not.

If you have made it to this point and you believe you are prepared for the 24-7-365 commitment required to become a service dog handler, and you are able to deal with all the obligations, financial and otherwise, and are willing to deal with being the center of attention, good or bad, when you appear in public, then you are ready to take the next step in the process. Getting a service dog should be undertaken in consultation with your doctors and mental health care team. It is not inconsequential as it will change your family dynamic, and having the support of those you live with is absolutely paramount. The addition of the service dog will add another degree of stress and complexity to an already complicated home front as you struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder.

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**Managing Editor:** Elliot Frutkin  
**Translator:** Édith LeBlanc  
**Contributors:**  
 Capt (Ret) Medric "Cous" Cousineau, SC, CD  
 OCdt Simon Dumoulin, Royal Military College Saint-Jean  
 Donna Mills, Walter Moniz and Dwayne Cormier,  
 Canada Company  
 Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services  
 Director Official Languages

The CMP Newsletter is published on the authority of the Chief of Military Personnel. The CMP Newsletter is available on the DND Intranet at <http://cmp-cpm.forces.mil.ca/new-bul/index-eng.asp>

**Comments should be sent directly to:**  
 CMP Newsletter Editor  
 National Defence Headquarters  
 101 Colonel By Drive  
 6NT, Ottawa ON, K1A 0K2  
 Or, via e-mail to:  
[CMPNews-NouvellesduCPM@forces.gc.ca](mailto:CMPNews-NouvellesduCPM@forces.gc.ca)



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In the follow-up piece to this article, I will address the benefits of your service dog, and delve into some of the nuances in more detail. Until then, if I may, “Keep Calm and Walk the Dog” is a mantra that has served me well on my road to recovery and coming to terms with my new normal.

Sincerest,

Medric “Cous” Cousineau, SC, CD, Capt (Ret)  
– Royal Canadian Air Force, Co-founder Paws Fur Thought  
& Thai the Service Dog.

*Note: Currently, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) do not have a service dog program. Any future decision to endorse such a program will be based on clinical evidence as it develops. The Canadian Forces Health Services Group follows literature concerning the efficacy of treatments very closely and recognizes that non-medical measures, such as service dogs, can complement mental health care and that there are service dog providers who are prepared to make them available to CAF personnel that meet their eligibility criteria. Canadian Forces Health Services Group aims to support members and does not oppose the use of service dogs by personnel.*

## Soldier On Afghanistan Relay: A journey of honour

During the six days leading up to the May 9, 2014 National Day of Honour, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) supported the Soldier On Afghanistan Relay. A team made up of 16 current and former CAF members, two Royal Canadian Mounted Police members and one civilian government employee who sustained an illness or injury while serving during Canada’s contribution to the Afghanistan mission, ran, wheeled and walked 290 kilometres through communities between Trenton and Ottawa, Ontario. Relay members took turns carrying a specially constructed baton which held the last Canadian flag to have flown at International Security Assistance Force Headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan. The flag arrived on Parliament Hill for the National Day of Honour ceremony and was presented to His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General and Commander-in-Chief of Canada, who accepted the flag on behalf of all Canadians.

Here’s what some of the participants had to say:

“I was able show others who may have post-traumatic stress disorder that they don’t have to hide or fear that they will be seen as weak or broken; because we are not,” said Sergeant Dan Matthews, Relay participant. “I showed that with hard work and determination, anything is possible regardless of injuries or other limitations.”

“The opportunity to plan and participate in the Soldier On Afghanistan Relay was an absolute honour,” explained Major Jay Feyko, Lead Officer for Soldier On. “It provided me the personal opportunity to represent the Canadian Armed Forces and thank Canadians for their excellent support during the Afghanistan mission while paying respect to all the sacrifices of the nation. I’m in awe of my ill and injured peers who embrace perseverance and inspire others to soldier on.”

“This relay was about remembering every soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice,” said Corporal (ret’d) Matthew Anderson.



Photo credit: Sgt. Matthew McGregor, Canadian Forces Combat Camera

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Inspector Richard Hayes leads the Soldier On Afghanistan Relay team past National Defence Headquarters on the last leg of the relay on May 8, 2014.

“For me, I did this relay with the thought of every mother, father, brother, sister and child who have been deeply impacted by the Afghanistan mission”

“I felt honoured to be able to carry the final flag flown in Afghanistan on its journey to Parliament Hill,” said Sergeant James MacIntyre. “To me the flag represents all Canadians and their support to the Canadian military. It represents all Canadian Armed Forces members who deployed to Afghanistan, those who returned with injuries, some that may never heal, and those who made the ultimate sacrifice.”

The relay served to thank Canadians for their incredible support throughout the mission, honour the sacrifices of a nation, and raise awareness of the support programs available to ill and injured serving and former CAF members. Thanks are due to all Canadian individuals, organizations, and proud supporters who came out to cheer for the Soldier On Afghanistan Relay team members! This incredible support is greatly appreciated.

Photos and videos of the Relay are available online.



## New mental health video

A new video is available to you on how to access mental health care and what to expect in treatment. Meet the multidisciplinary team responsible for the mental health and well-being of CAF members as they walk you through the process of receiving mental health treatment. CAF members have access to the full spectrum of quality medical care available in Canada. Find out more by watching the [video](#).



Photo credit: Alyssa Seii, Marketing Assistant, Canada Company

**Your military training recognized at institutions of higher education:** At the end of May, Canada Company hosted its first Western Conference for the Military Employment Transition program. As part of the event, a major milestone was reached when members of six national educational institutions and Dwayne Cormier of Canada Company signed a memorandum of understanding for the Military Employment Transition Education Consortium. The purpose of the Consortium is for institutions of higher learning to formally commit to recognize military training and service as credit toward post-secondary education credentials.

Canada Company's Military Employment Transition program provides employer partners, releasing CAF members, Reserve Force members and veterans with the chance to engage and work together to ease the transition from military to civilian employment. The program supports the Canada Company 10 000 Jobs Coalition, which was formed to challenge corporate Canada to hire 10 000 Veterans by 2023. More than 100 military-friendly employers are committed to making this initiative a success. The Western Conference included 120 participants, including 26 employer partners from across Canada.

For more information about Canada Company, employment opportunities and the Education Consortium, please register at the [Military Employment Transition website](#) or contact [info@canadacompany.ca](mailto:info@canadacompany.ca).



## Finding your children a school in the official language of your choice

It's posting season! As a Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) member and a parent, you may be wondering which school your children should attend at your new location. There are resources available to help you find French-language schools outside Quebec and English-language schools in Quebec.

The [Éducation en langue française au Canada website](#) and the [Quebec English School Boards Association website](#) can help you quickly find schools across Canada.

### French outside Quebec

Regardless of where you are posted, you have a good chance of finding a French-language school. The network of French-language schools outside Quebec consists of 28 school boards all across the country. There are over 630 elementary and secondary schools, with nearly 150,000 students.

On the [Éducation en langue française au Canada website](#), you will find lists of French-language educational institutions, including daycares, elementary schools, secondary schools, postsecondary institutions, continuing education and adult education. To do this, select a level of schooling and enter your postal code in the site's search engine.

### English in Quebec

Quebec has nine English-language school boards, with over 300 educational institutions. The Quebec English School Boards Association website enables you to find English-language elementary and secondary schools in different parts of Quebec. Simply choose a school board for a full list of schools in a given region.

As a CAF member, you also have access to the information and support offered by Military Family Resource Centres. You can also dial 1-800-866-4546 at any time to speak to a Family Information Line counsellor, or [visit familyforce.ca](#).

Members of the Royal Military College Saint-Jean Arts and Culture Club visited Ste. Anne's Hospital as part of their bi-annual visit to veterans. The officer cadets spent a few hours speaking with the veterans and listening to their fascinating, and sometimes tragic, stories. Some of those whom the cadets met fought during the Second World War, others in the Korean War and, in some case, both of those conflicts.



Photo credit : OCott Rudy Colas-Livernois



## Examples of diversity

A recent report, tabled in Parliament by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, referenced two important examples of the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) support to multiculturalism. They were that:

- The CAF Chaplaincy unveiled a new CAF Chaplain Branch Identifier in May 2012 that bears the new motto entitled “Vocatio Ad Servitium”, meaning “Called to Serve”, as well as a Tree and Light which are both religious symbols considered significant to many different world religions. This also adorns the new Chaplain Branch Flag. These initiatives have been enacted in order to be fully multicultural and reflect the CAF Chaplain Branch’s move toward increasing representation of faiths including Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith groups.
- In January 2013, Acting Sub-Lieutenant Nicole Shingoose, from the Plains Cree Moosomin Reserve in Saskatchewan, became the first cadet from the Aboriginal Leadership Opportunity Year program to receive a commission from the Royal Military College of Canada. The Aboriginal Leadership Opportunity Year program was created in 2008 to provide a military education and learning experience for members of aboriginal communities in Canada. It is one of several programs created to demonstrate to aboriginal communities in rural, urban and remote locations that the CAF offer a fair and equitable environment in which to serve.

DND/CAF are committed to creating a workplace that is fair, respectful, inclusive and supportive of diversity, and a workforce that is reflective of Canada’s population.



The CAF Chaplain Branch Identifier bearing the new motto entitled “Vocatio Ad Servitium”, meaning “Called to Serve.”