

COMMANDING OFFICERS (CO) UPDATE

Greetings parents, I hope everyone has enjoyed the great summer and fall that we have had in terms of weather and is well prepared for the cold that has quickly set in.

Now that we are a couple months into the training year, I wanted to share some information with you so that you know how things are going on the facilitation end of 758's cadet program. We do share some information with the cadets on parade, but I know that information probably doesn't make it home to many parents, our SSC has been doing an amazing job at trying to keep you informed.

Last year I shared that on the Canadian Cadet Organization and the Department of National Defense (DND) side, there had been some ongoing budget cuts that severely affected summer camps as well as uniform acquisition making it challenging for us to get many cadets into uniform and limiting opportunities for summer training. Another challenge that has been happening across the organization is having enough staff to fill area and regional positions as well as local corps and squadrons. 758 has approximately 160 cadets and we've had, for the last two years, a waiting list of upwards of 200 applicants waiting for a spot. For decades, we were the largest unit in Brampton, but now the other air units, the army unit and sea cadet unit all have numbers similar to ours and waiting lists of their own. The demand for our community to be a part of this program is fantastic but there is currently not enough facilities nor staff to meet this demand.

STAFFING

At the beginning of the 2024-2025 training year, 758 had five officer staff and five civilian members for a total of 10 staff. Since then, one officer retired, one was moved to another unit that was in need of a CO, one took leave to focus on family and one chose to release from the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) due to scheduling conflicts with her civilian career. Two of the four volunteers also left to prioritize schooling and career aspirations.

That said, at the beginning of this training year, we had only two experienced officer staff, two brand new staff and one new volunteer for a total of 5 staff members.

Cadet program operations are the responsibility of the CO but are run primarily by these functions:

Training department: Plans and executes all classes and activities for the cadets and manages Microsoft Teams and the squadron website in collaboration with the Admin office. Usually with a Training Officer and a minimum of 5 training staff members for a squadron our size.

Admin. department: Responsible for all cadet administrative tasks, recruiting, onboarding, managing files, documents and attendance. An Admin Officer and support staff if available.

Supply department: Facilitates the ordering and distribution of uniforms and manages all squadron assets. A Supply Officer and support staff if available.

Deputy Commanding Officer (DCO): Supervises squadron staff, facilitates staff development and deals with cadet disciplinary issues should they arise.

Due to staffing changes, we started this year with:

Training: 1 new Training Officer and 1 volunteer, both with no experience in the role.

Admin: N/A

Supply: 1 new Supply officer with no experience in the role.

DCO: N/A

I myself being new to my role have been doing my best to juggle being CO, take care of DCO and Admin tasks as well as supporting our new Training and Supply officers. Since the end of the last training year, I have had multiple meetings with my bosses at the Area Office about finding 758 more staff and support, which has taken then some time as there are other units who also need their support.

As of today, what I've managed to achieve is, I've had recruiting for 758 closed for the year, I don't want to take on more cadets at this time causing a heavier burden on our few staff and at the expense of our current cadets who have given so much time and energy into this program. I am happy to also report that the Area Office has transferred to us two experienced officers, one has just taken on the role as Admin Officer and the other who will be helping in the training department. Our training officer is currently at a cadet activity 3-4 days a week which far exceeds the CAF reserve member commitment requirement.

UNIFORMS

Cadet uniform orders (supplied by an independent company), works on a point system. Each item costs a certain number of points, each corps/squadron is allotted a certain number of points per year to spend on uniforms. What happened as of last year was, DND's rearranging of funding for the CAF resulted in the cadet budget for uniforms being cut in half. It just so happened that around the same time, the cost for uniforms parts inflated significantly resulting in the organization deciding that first and second year cadets will not be getting uniforms. That still leaves a reduced allotment of points to order uniform parts for our returning cadets, but our Area Office has been working hard to move points around from units that don't need them to those who do.

Our Supply Officer has been systematically bringing in our returning cadets to get their uniform parts swapped for larger sizes, we also received a shipment of items and so we are focused on getting all our returning cadets properly kitted as soon as possible.

CONCLUSION

We have had a slow start and recognize that there are gaps in our communication and organization that we are working earnestly at filling, but it is my focus and priority to make sure that by the end of this training year, our cadets would have had an amazing and fulfilling experience.

“The most successful people see adversity not as a stumbling block, but as a steppingstone to greatness” – Shawn Anchor

758 Just celebrated our 60th anniversary and I know this is not the first time we have been met with challenges, but we will continue to adapt and overcome as we always have. Special thanks to you the parents for supporting your children in this program and for your understanding and patience with us as we aim to help develop these cadets to meet their full potential.

Captain Koree Haye